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ABSTRACT

This research concerned political socialization in the early grades in two elementary schools with particular attention to differential socialization of middle and lower class children, and boys and girls. The research focused on authority patterns, teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil behavior streams and interaction, how teachers present the outside world and their own role definitions, and children's orientations to these issues. Taped interviews were conducted with 40 children in a lower class school and 60 children in a middle class school. Interviews dealt with perceptions of the teachers and students, classroom conflict and authority, and social issues. The study also examined some ways in which classroom activities socialize children to prevailing values of a society and its culture, how children experience the everyday political world of the classroom, when authority functions well and when conflicts occur, and how these factors are related to the child's evolving awareness and involvement in power relationships. (Author)

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TWO SCHOOLS: CHILDREN, SOCIAL STRATIFICATION, AND THE POLITICS OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Final Report to the National Institute of Education: Grant No. NEG 0030154

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June 1979

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INTRODUCTION

That the educational system plays a central role in sustaining political stability has been recognized since Plato: The Republic provides a model curriculum for reproducing what Plato regarded as the ideal polity. From a very different perspective, Louis Althusser, the French Marxist philosopher, has argued that, in capitalist societies, the school has replaced the Church of the feudal age as the principal ideological instrument of legitimation and social cohesion.

Althusser suggests that ideology cannot be divorced from material practice. The process of socialization and ideological indoctrination is a process of learning to perform the rituals of everyday life.[1] Schooling constitutes a daily ritual for the forty-five million American youth enrolled in schools.

My interest in studying classroom life in the early years of elementary school was prompted by the fact that this enormous extension of schooling has not produced a more equalitarian and meritocratic society. Before describing my own research, it is useful to review five other approaches to the relationship between the educational system and inequality in the United States.

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[1]Louis Althusser, Lenin and Philosophy (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970

Political socialization

Although political scientists have studied children and schooling in enormous detail, there has been little interest in examining the relationship between the school system and inequality. Most studies of political socialization take the contours of the overall system for granted and focus on how children become incorporated into dominant political institutions.[2] The major object of attention is how children develop attitudes toward formal political institutions, notably the presidency and political party system. It seems questionable to study what is of peripheral interest to children and to ignore aspects of their lives that interest them and appear to be of great political relevance.

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[2]Among the major studies are David Easton and Jack Dennis, Children in the Political System: Origins of Political Legitimacy (New York: McGraw Hill, 1969); Fred I. Greenstein, Children and Politics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965); and Robert D. Hess and Judith V. Torney, The Development of Political Attitudes in Children (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor, 1968). Anthologies include Jack Dennis, ed., Socialization to Politics: A Reader (New York: John Wiley, 1973); Stanley Allen Renshon, ed., Handbook of Political Socialization: Theory of Political Socialization: Theory and Research (New York: Free Press, 1977); David C. Schwartz and Sandra Kenyon Schwartz, eds., New Directions in Political Socialization (New York: The Free Press, 1975); and Robert S. Sigel, ed., Learning About Politics: A Reader in Political Socialization (New York: Random House, 1970). Several excellent critical reviews have appeared. In addition to those in the anthologies just cited, see R. W. Connell and Murray Grot, "Science and Ideology in American 'Political Socialization' Research," Berkeley Journal of Sociology, XVII (1972-73), 165-93; and William R. Schonfeld, "The Focus of Political Socialization Research: An Evaluation," World Politics, 23, no. 3 (April 1971), 544-78.

Take as an example, the finding by James Colemen that the variable in his massive study which correlated highest with children's test scores was their sense of control over the immediate environment.[3] (This seems intuitively sensible, since tests are an important ingredient in children's environment.) In one of the most influential studies in the field of political socialization, David Easton and Jack Dennis note the significance of a related concept: political efficacy, which they define as composed of three elements: a norm, a disposition, and behavior.[4] However, they add, "Because we are dealing with children [who are not citizens] it is appropriate to set aside the third implication of the term and confine our analysis to the first two."[5] Easton and Dennis proceed to devote the remainder of their study to children's attitudes toward the formal political system. By defining the political world so narrowly, Easton and Dennis commit

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[3]James S. Coleman, Equality of Educational Opportunity (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, U.S. Office of Education, OE-38001, 1966), p. 319.

[4]Easton and Dennis, selection excerpted in Dennis, op. cit., p. 83.

[5]Ibid., p. 84.

several errors. They fail to recognize that children are forced to confront their immediate environment and thereby develop varying degrees of self-efficacy about this environment regardless of whether they are citizens. Easton and Dennis do not question the possible relationship between children's sense of efficacy and their political attitudes and activity. And they ignore that children are acting in the present, with possibly consequential effects for their later political attitudes and actions.

Another shortcoming of most political socialization studies is that they fail to recognize that citizens become incorporated into the polity on unequal terms. The equalitarian connotations of the concept of citizenship obscures fundamental social, economic, and political inequalities among ostensibly equal citizens. By failing to appreciate the central significance of this process, the question is not asked of how schooling contributes to the production of unequal places in the society and the distribution of people to these unequal places.[6]

It is striking that, during the 1960s and 1970s, when political debates and struggles were being waged around the issue of the relationship between equality and education,

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[6]Nicos Poulantzas, Classes in Contemporary Capitalism (London: New Left Books, 1975), Chapter 1.

political scientists studying schooling and political socialization made little contribution to this debate. There is, however, a voluminous literature outside the political science discipline on the political relevance of schooling. The other approaches reviewed here are all concerned with the relationship between schooling and inequality.

Progressivism and Education: Meritocracy, Human Development and Cultural Imperialism

Educational reform occupied a central place in the Progressives' theory and political program. Their approach is so influential that it continues to inform current dominant values about education in the United States. In describing the Progressives, we can also describe what might be called a progressive view of education, social class, and society.[7] The Progressives saw education as an important instrument in equalizing opportunity, providing essential and politically neutral cognitive skills necessary to run an industrial society and instilling appropriate cultural values for an industrial capitalist society.

Equalizing opportunity. In the Progressives' view, equalizing opportunity would give every member of

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[7]For a generally sympathetic view of the Progressive approach to education, see Lawrence Cremin's various writings.

the society a chance to attain one of the few privileged positions. Whatever inequality prevails therefore reflects the neutral imperatives of an industrial order as well as the natural differences among individuals resulting from varying abilities, motivations, and skills. In the Progressive view, education would eradicate pre-existing social privileges -- so long as equal access to education existed. Thus, education would unfreeze the class structure and contribute to a liberal society.

Technical skills.

The schools were to be a great engine for teaching members of the society how to run the developing industrial machine. An emphasis on cognitive skills followed naturally from this view, for without these technical skills, the industrial machine would founder. Yet for schools to maximize efficiency throughout the society, they had to be run by "professionals" (free of "political interference").

Cultural values.

However, technical skills alone were inadequate to produce an expanding, well-integrated, industrial, capitalist order. The Progressives also recognized the need for appropriate cultural values. This meant a heavy dose of cultural imperialism: for the Progressives were also interested in having the schools purvey cultural values which would homogenize the society in a certain way, in face of the threat posed by massive immigration.

In particular, schools were to convey the values described by Weber as comprising the Protestant ethic: thrift, frugality, hard-work, and discipline. The schools conveyed a secularized Protestantism, reflecting a Protestant (or, better, WASP) dominated society -- in the name of the "melting pot." The schools manipulated culture in an assault against the ethnic groups from Eastern and Southern Europe who immigrated to the United States around the turn of the twentieth century.

In this assault, the schools attempted to wrest influence over first generation children from immigrant parents. The school was not only to provide technical training but socialization into a common culture -- from which immigrant parents were in large measure excluded. Included in these cultural values was technocracy, discipline, individualism, and compliance. The forging of a common culture thus helped to foster a capitalist industrialist order and strengthen middle class domination. Ironically, although the school system helped to play a leading role in maintaining social stability and limiting democratic change, it was presented an engine of democracy and progressive change.

The reform wave of the 1960s provides recent evidence that the schools have not lost their luster as ostensible instruments for social reform during times of upheaval. As Christopher Jencks has noted, reforming

schools provides an attractive surrogate for reducing inequality directly.[8]

The New Pessimism: Coleman and Jencks

The remaining approaches enumerated here take issue with the optimism underlying the dominant Progressive view. All challenge the assumption that schools exercise a progressive influence. Two major studies within the social science establishment provide one version of the skeptical reaction to the progressive view of schooling. James Coleman, in a study mandated by Congress, in accordance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, examined whether, when the social class background of students was held constant, unequal expenditures on schools were correlated with students' performance on cognitive tests.[9] Contrary to expectation (the study was presumably to generate data useful in building the case for increased educational expenditures to lower class schools), Coleman found surprisingly little relationship between a host of school characteristics and pupils' test scores. Among the measures which did not much affect pupils' achievement

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[8]Christopher Jencks et al., Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America (New York: Basic Books, 1972).

[9]Coleman et al., op. cit. For a volume analyzing the report, see Frederick and Daniel P. Moynihan, eds., On Equality of Educational Opportunity (New York: Vintage, 1972).

were the educational credentials and experience of teachers, age of school buildings, and extent of their science facilities. Coleman reluctantly concluded that educational "inputs" (mainly associated with expenditures) had little influence on the output of pupils' test scores, once one controlled for the class background of pupils. In other words, schools did little to influence pre-existing differences in educational attainment between children of different social classes. (One factor which Coleman did find significant was the racial and class mix within schools: black pupils' performed better than predicted when attending racially integrated schools. This finding was a major impetus for urban school busing to achieve racial integration.)

Perhaps the most telling criticism of the Coleman report was made by Bowles and Levin, who question why Coleman felt compelled to control for pupils' socioeconomic status before assessing the impact of variations in educational outlays.[10] Although Coleman's rationale was to isolate the impact of educational expenditures from the class mix of students in different schools, Bowles and Levin

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[10]Samuel Bowles and Levin, "The Determinants of Scholastic Achievement," in James W. Guthrie et al., Schools and Inequality (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1971).

argue that, precisely because the two are intertwined in the real world, one should not separate them in statistical analysis. In fact, they go on to show, if Coleman had reversed the order of entry of factors in the regression equations used to measure the impact of educational expenditures, he would have found that educational expenditures explain test score variations better than the socioeconomic status of students.

Jencks began from the findings of the Coleman report and concurs with Coleman's analysis that cognitive inequality (as measured by test scores) is not much affected by differences in expenditures among schools. But Jencks goes further in trying to understand the roots of economic inequality. And his findings are even more startling, for he discovers that future occupation and income are not much affected by students' cognitive skill levels.[11]

Jencks does not conclude from the lack of association between test scores and future economic position that schools are not significant. For there is a strong association between the amount of schooling

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[11] Jencks, op. cit. For two collections of critical analyses, see Donald M. Levine and Mary Jo Bane, The 'Inequality' Controversy (New York: Basic Books, 1975); and Perspectives on Inequality, Harvard Educational Review Reprint Series no. 8 (1973).

students obtain and their future earnings. More important than educational success, as measured by test scores (whether IQ or cognitive) is possessing the persistence, ambition, and other resources to stay in school. Jencks speculates that these may be the very traits that employers value in school-stayers as opposed to dropouts. This may explain why schools serve as such a key certifying agency. "The primary criterion for certifying a student is usually the amount of time he has spent in school, not the skills he has learned. This arrangement guarantees the schools a captive audience."[12]

Not coincidentally, the process also faithfully transmits class inequality: upper middle class children get an average of four more years of schooling than lower class children, a result, according to Jencks, of hereditary factors, the fact that upper middle class children are raised in environments where cognitive skills are nurtered better, and differential aspirations of students from different class backgrounds. Altogether, Jencks succeeds in explaining only about half the variation in occupational status by family background, test scores, educational attainments, or any other discernible factors.

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[12]Jencks, op. cit., p. 135.

He attributes the remaining variation to ambition or luck.

Jencks does not note some features of the class-based system which make his findings more understandable. For example, the tests on which middle class children perform better are constructed by middle class professionals. Middle class parents are in a position to encourage their children to seek more education because of their superior economic resources, which makes it more realistic for their children to aim higher.

Philip Jackson points that, on the basis of his own analysis, Jencks stops where he ought to begin. If Jencks is correct that noncognitive effects of school are more important than the cognitive effects, then this is the domain that should have been studied closely.[13] Yet there is no attempt in Inequality to delve into this subject and Jencks admits that "we do not know what these noncognitive effects are likely to be."[14]

Despite their liberal expectations about the efficacy of schooling, Coleman and Jencks are forced to conclude that schools do not play a progressive role with respect to class inequalities. Instead, schools seem to

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[13]Philip W. Jackson, "After Apple-Picking," in Perspectives on Inequality, op. cit., pp. 15-24.

[14]Jencks, op. cit., p. 134.

have little independent role to play. At most, they serve as a fig leaf to obscure the more underlying fact of inequality. Moreover, the inequality that emerges from Jencks' account is not a meritocracy, in which an intellectual elite is groomed to assume the reins of power. Instead, inequality seems grounded in mysterious noncognitive characteristics of ambition, expectations, and luck.

Educatinal Muckraking

A muckraking tradition is not as hesitant to identify the shortcomings of schools. Unlike Coleman and Jencks, for whom schools seem to exert little independent influence, muckraking critics of liberal education dwell at length on the impact that schools have. However, far from being part of the solution, for these authors schools are part of the problem. In their view, schools damage children and contribute to a bureaucratized, unequal society.

Two strands can be distinguished. Muckraking educational historians have challenged the optimistic view that schools have historically served as a democratizing force.[15] According to Colin Greer, the Great School

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[15]Some of the important studies include Raymond E. Callahan, Education and the Cult of Efficiency: A Study of the Social Forces that Have Shaped the Administration of the Public Schools (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962); Colin Greer, The Great School Legend: A Revisionist Interpretation of

Legend is a shabby myth. In fact, schools served to subjugate immigrant children. Michael Katz studies the process by which schools became free, compulsory, bureaucratic, racist, and class-biased. "Education substituted for deference as a source of social cement and social order in a society stratified by class rather than rank."[16] In the late nineteenth century, the bureaucratic model of education gradually replaced alternative forms of organizing schools, including what Katz calls paternalistic voluntarism -- education supported by the wealthy as a philanthropic gesture to the poor; democratic localism -- the characteristic mode until then; and corporate voluntarism -- privately run schools analogous to corporate business enterprises. The bureaucratic model was defended as the best way to assure order, standardization, and quality in the turbulent period of immigration.

American Public Education (New York: Basic Books 1972); Clarence Karier et al., Roots of Crisis: American Education in the Twentieth Century (New York: Rand McNally, 1973); Michael B. Katz, The Irony of Early School Reform (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968); Class, Bureaucracy, and Schools: The Illusion of Educational Change in America (New York: Praeger, 1975); Joel Spring, The Sorting Machine: National Educational Policy Since 1945 (New York: David McKay, 1976); and David B. Tyack, The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

[16]Katz, Class, Bureaucracy, and Schools, op. cit., p. 54.

A second strand of the muckraking tradition has focused on contemporary inequality.[17] Its principal criticisms include the joyless character of schools, continued disparities in access to education, and the socially repressive functions that schools serve. Holt, Illich, Kozol and others describe the joyless, bureaucratic, stifling atmosphere of schools. They portray in vivid detail the repetitive character of learning, the rigid hierarchy, the fragmentation of knowledge, and the fostering of competition among children.

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[17] For some of the important works in a voluminous muckraking literature (muckraking is not meant here in a pejorative sense), see Martin Carnoy, ed., Schooling in Corporate Society: The Political Economy of Education in America (New York: David McKay, 1972); Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968); Education for Critical Consciousness (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973); John Holt, How Children Fail (New York: Delta, 1964); Ivan Illich, Deschooling Society (New York: Harper & Row, 1971); Herbet Kohl, Thirty-six Children (New York: Norton, 1968); Jonathan Kozol, Death at an Early Age: The Destruction of the Hearts and Minds of Negro Children in the Boston Public Schools (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967); The Night is Dark and I am Far From Home (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975); Annette T. Rubinstein, ed., Schools Against Children: The Case for Community Control (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970); Charles E. Silberman, Crisis in the Classroom: The Remaking of American Education (New York: Random House, 1970); Miriam Wasserman, The School Fix: NYC, USA (New York: Outerbridge & Dienstfrey, 1970); and ed., Demystifying School: Writings and Experiences (New York: Praeger, 1974).

These studies focus on the authoritarian nature of schools and classrooms. Even a theorist who aims to strengthen teachers' control in the classroom points out that teachers "are more concerned with maintaining power over students than in transmitting knowledge and skills. . . ."[18]

Jules Henry notes that "The first two years of school are spent not so much in learning the rudiments of the 3 Rs, as in learning definitions [of proper behavior]."[19]

According to Elearnor Leacock, schools help perpetuate a system of inequality. They are structured to help the bureaucracy to function, not so that learning can occur. Teachers fail to stimulate students' curiosity and confuse moral precepts with intellectual development. Teachers gain admiration of peers, parents, and school administrators by maintaining classroom order rather than by encouraging children's intellectual development. Leacock finds differences in the way teaching occurs in lower and

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[18]Ronald L. MacMillan, Behavior Modification in Education (New York: Macmillan. 1973), p. 220. This was corroborated by Paul V. Gump in his studies of teacher behavior in the classroom. Gump finds that about two fifths of teachers' time is devoted to what he terms structuring activity: classroom management, setting up tasks, granting permission, and punishment. Paul V. Gump, "The Classroom Behavior Setting: Its Nature and Relation to Student Behavior," Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, July 1967, ERIC ED 015 515, p. 55.

[19]Jules Henry, Culture Against Man (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), p. 292.

middle class schools. It is not so much that middle class values are imposed on working class children but that "the school is conveying a middle class image of how working class children are and how they should be -- an image which emphasizes obedience, respect, and conscientiousness as desirable, rather than ability, responsibility, and initiative. . . .[20] Although Leacock does not attempt to show the connection between the school and the larger class-based society, her study suggests how the school reflects this society and contributes to its reproduction.

The Radical Critique

There is a thin divide between the muckraking and radical analyses of schools. The features that liberal critics point to as evidence of the schools' failure are used by radical analysts to suggest how schools succeed in recreating inequality. Yet the process is not smooth: contradictions in the educational system are rooted in the divergent requirements of capital accumulation and legitimation as well as in the fact that

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[20]Eleanor E. Leacock, Teaching and Learning in City Schools (New York: Basic Books, 1969), p. 181.

schools serve as an arena within which class struggle occurs.

The most ambitious Marxist analysis of the American educational system has been Bowles and Gintis' Schooling in Capitalist America: The Contradictions of Liberal Educational Reform. Bowles and Gintis begin from the premise that the educational system promotes rather than undermines class inequality. They document how the extension of schooling has not much affected social mobility or relative inequalities in American society. They demonstrate the failure of educational reform and the fact that, to the extent that schooling does contribute to later economic success, it is not as a result of students' superior IQ or cognitive performance. "To capture the economic import of education, we must relate its social structure to the forms of consciousness, interpersonal behavior, and personality it fosters and reinforces in students."[21]

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[21]Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life (New York: Basic Books, 1976). For an excellent critical review, see Sherry Gorelick, "Undermining Hierarchy: Problems of Schooling in Capitalist America, Monthly Review, 29 (October 1977), pp. 20-36, which Bowles and Gintis replied to in a later issue of Monthly Review. There is a rich literature in France from a similar perspective. See, for example, Christian Baudelot and Roger Establet, L'Ecole capitaliste en France (Paris: Maspero, 1972).

The importance of schooling as an agency for maintaining social control can be inferred from the fact that the years of schooling students obtain counts for more than skill attainments or IQ in predicting economic success. Although IQ is used as a way to legitimate inequality it is, in fact, a poor predictor of future economic success. And IQ does not intervene much to alter the impact of family background on social mobility.

What are the noncognitive factors promoted by schools that seem to be so important for bolstering capitalist social relations? Bowles and Gintis argue that schools foster a "consciousness of inevitability," as well as a "belief in the futility of organizing for social change. . . ."[22] Schools teach students not to succeed but to fail: "By the time most students terminate schooling, they have been put down enough to convince them of their inability to succeed at the next highest level. Through competition, success, and defeat in the classroom, students are reconciled to their social position."[23]

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[22]Bowles and Gintis, p. 128.

[23]Ibid., p. 106.

Bowles and Gintis conclude that there is a correspondence between the school system and the capitalist labor process: patterns of authority and control at school replicate those of the work place. Yet schools display contradictions: they do not only produce docile workers but rebels and misfits. Class struggle is indirectly reflected in the schools and educational reforms evolve in response to historical struggle and change. In particular, the educational system has been shaped by the transformation from entrepreneurial to corporate capitalism, with its need for clerical and office workers.

Bowles and Gintis study schools at the macro-level but most of their analysis is based on inferences about processes occurring within classrooms. Ray Rist's The Urban School: A Factory for Failure: A Study of Education in American Society provides a micro-analysis of how students get sorted out at an early age in one classroom. Rist argues that "It is in the examination of classroom behavior that I believe one finds the clearest expression of what the educational experience means for the life changes of the child."[24]

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[24] Ray C. Rist, The Urban School: A Factory for Failure (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1973), p. 21.

Rist finds that a form of tracking occurred within the kindergarten class after only one week. The teacher divided the class into three groups -- fast, medium, and slow learners -- and provided differential treatment and rewards on the basis of group membership. Thus, teacher expectations about whether children were fast or slow learners played a crucial role in influencing assignment in class to skill level group; and there was a high correlation between social class background and the skill level of the group assignment.

Rist found that students assigned to the fast learner group received more of the teacher's attention, teaching time, and praise. In a form of the pygmalion effect studied by Rosenthal, the teacher shaped the teaching situation such that students performed according to her expectations.[25] The middle class children learned to perform better and exert greater control; the other children learned compliance. Rist concludes that the teacher's role is crucial in constructing a social situation: by rewarding differentially, some groups are defined as winners and others as losers.

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[25]Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson, Pygmalion in the Classroom: Teacher Expectation and Pupils' Intellectual Development (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1968).

Rist studies how teachers deal with children. But he does not learn how children deal with their school situation. This is the focus of the present study.

The Absent Participants

There is general agreement among students of education that the major political impact of schools is not in the realm of teaching cognitive skills but in the realm of the values that schools foster. Studies of life in classrooms, to borrow the title of one of the best analyses, document the bureaucratic character, discipline, and triviality of much that passes for education.[26] But these studies do not attempt to connect this political message to the larger social structure. However, these first-hand observations vividly corroborate Bowles and Gintis' inferences that schools foster the values needed for eventual participation in the alienated labor process. They agree that what is taught in school is quite different from the explicit message of the formal curriculum: the

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[26]Philip P. Jackson, Life in Classrooms (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1968); and, for a review of other literature on the subject, see John C. Glidewell et al., "Socialization and Social Structure in the Classroom," in Lois Wladis Hoffman and Martin L. Hoffman, eds., Review of Child Development Research (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1966), vol. 2, pp. 221-56.

hidden curriculum is more significant than the acquisition of cognitive skills.

In my own research, I was interested in learning what values schools convey to children. That schools teach lessons does not mean that students will accept them; it is necessary to understand schooling from the viewpoint of students as well as from that of an adult observer.

Nor do schools convey the same message to all students. I chose two schools "serving" a very different class mix of students in order to learn about the differential socialization that occurs for children of different social class backgrounds. Rather than the school experience representing an undifferentiated whole, it differs extensively for different kinds of children. I do not mean to minimize the importance of race and sexual differences when I concentrate on the different messages schools provide to children from different social class backgrounds.

American schools encourage two modes of participation in the society which, although very different, are linked in one internally contradictory whole. One mode of political behavior is a moderately participatory, moderately critical style; the other mode is a more passive nonparticipatory style. One kind of participation is "appropriate" for the middle class; the other, for the more uninformed passive political stance of the American working class.

The United States is not unique in training for inequality. But in every other capitalist democracy, there are working class institutions that counter the socializing influence of schools and other elements of the ideological state apparatus. The United States is nearly unique in its lack of socializing agencies that resist the dominant ideological message.

My principal finding is that the two schools I studied present very different (if inter-related) political messages to students. A static comparison of two schools with predominantly different social class mixes of students exaggerates the differences among schools, since in most schools there is a greater class mix of students. (In such cases, the different socializing messages probably penetrates within the classroom, as Ray Rist has shown.) I find that one school fosters a critical, yet acquiescent, attitude toward school authorities, rules, and curriculum. This is also linked to the development among children in this (middle class) school of critical attitudes toward external political authorities as well. The other school imposes a dull yet chaotic uniformity. Students are ground down to the level of mediocrity, either through traditional classroom teaching which leaves little room for initiative, or through an open classroom program which verges on anarchy and

chaos. The two produce a similar result in making students feel helpless and hopeless.

By serving as "models of society," in Joseph Grannis' words, schools seem to perform an important political function. This is not meant to belittle the importance of other influences in children's lives: family, television, and peer group influences are mong the most important. I do not mean to "overload" schools as being the sole important influence on children. Far from it. School fits into the total social fabric of children's lives and further study would be essential to examine the relationship between school and other factors.

A comparison of children's attitudes toward their school and classroom life suggests the necessity to anchor discussion of the origins of political attitudes in children's concrete experience. Young children can describe their school environment with great perspicacity. How sad that most scholarly studies (as well as schools) deny students the right to speak.

In this monograph, I have rectified the imbalance and perhaps erred in the opposite direction. The core of my study is children's own descriptions of their school life. The study is organized by themes relating to important aspects of children's school experience. I attempt to learn where students converge in their attitudes toward school and where the different character of the schools I studied is reflected in different attitudes among

children from these schools.

Research Procedure

My research was conducted in two public schools in Manhattan, one with predominantly poor students (PS 16), the other with a higher proportion of middle class students (PS 38). Permission to conduct interviews was obtained from school authorities and parents of forty children in the lower class school and sixty children in the middle class school. The number of those who did not complete permission forms exceeded those that did. There is no claim to representativity and the validity of quantitative analyses is severely limited. At best, I will analyze broad trends regarding the issues raised here.

I chose to study mostly second graders, with some first and third graders as well. The rationale for studying young children is that I believe political orientations develop early. Since I lacked training in appropriate theory and research methods, and feared that I would be unable to hold structured conversations with children younger than seven years old, I focused the research on this age group.

For several weeks, my research assistants and I visited the schools regularly to observe second grade classrooms. We took extensive field notes of classroom activities. We also attempted a quantitiative code of

teacher-student interaction. We found that teachers in the lower class school are far more punitive -- so much so that it is unnecessary to develop an elaborate study to establish the point. What is more useful is to describe what we observed in the two schools. These observations are interspersed in the study.

The core of the study is conversations with students about their school life. Although school is far from all of students' lives, it is an important segment of it -- about half their waking hours. The influence of family, television, and friends doubtless is cumulatively greater. However, school represents the first massive and sustained contact children have with life in institutions. Although one cannot generalize from students' life in school to their life outside (and cetainly not to their future orientations and behavior as political participants), it would seem logical to focus on children's first organized institutional participation.

Anchoring children's orientations within the institutional context makes these orientations more comprehensible. For example, the rigid, unresponsive world of the lower class school makes the apparently resigned, acquiescent views of children from these schools far more understandable.

Most of this study relies on information obtained from interviews with students. The interviews were

conducted by my research assistants and myself; the "we" used in the study is more than editorial usage.[27] The interviews followed an agenda of issues and included many closed-ended questions. They were divided into seven segments. The number of separate discussions needed to complete the whole interview schedule varied with different students, according to the time available, and the student's apparent interest. The average length of conversations was far longer with students from PS 38 (the middle class school). They gave longer answers to each question and chose to discuss more questions at each interview. This in itself is significant for the interview process can be considered a specific social situation, one that was a familiar part of PS 38 students' world whereas many students from PS 16, the lower class school, seemed incredulous that adults were soliciting their opinions.

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[27]I would like to thank my research assistants, Marcia Burdette, Nicole Fermon, and Rosalie Siegel, as well as students, teachers, and principals at the two schools where research was conducted. The names of the schools, teachers, and students have been changed in this report. I am most grateful for the financial support of the National Institute of Education.

Much of what follows are excerpts from the transcripts of our interviews with children. Their comments are often pungent and penetrating, with an immediacy that cuts through elaborate analysis. I have often preferred to allow their words to take precedence over extended analysis -- in part because I have been at a loss to embellish their remarks. Yet most of what children say about schools is quite boring, in conformity with the style of schools themselves, much as discussions of bureaucracy often reproduce the dull routine of bureaucracy itself.

WHY SCHOOL?

Philip Jackson has noted "an important fact about a student's life that teachers and parents often prefer not to talk about, at least not in front of students. This is the fact that young people have to be in schools, whether they want to be or not."[1] It is universally accepted that children will attend school full-time. Schools perform a custodial role over children during much of the day. They have become the official agency for teaching basic cognitive skills. They channel students within the occupational structure and legitimize the resulting inequality. They plan a critical role in transmitting dominant values to the young.

Although children are aware of the compulsory nature of school, how salient is this for them? The first question asked in the interview was, "Why do you go to school?" Other questions further explored students' attitudes toward attending school. Only a handful of the hundred students interviewed alluded to the compulsory nature of school. Sam Lackley is one of the few: "Now, that is one of the hardest questions in the world. Why do I go to school? (pause) Because I have to, that's why." (16, Kro, 1-1)[2]

Andrei Sarkhov (38,P1,1-2) emphasizes the School's custodial function when he says that he attends school because: "my mother

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[1] Philip Jackson, Life in Classrooms (New York, 1968), 9.

[2] The notations in parentheses identify: (a) the school: PS 38 or 16 [in this case PS 16]. (b) the teacher's initials, at PS 38; or first letters of last name, for PS 16; and (c) the interview and page number of the transcript where the quotation appears.

wants me to...Because she has to go to work."

Since schools have squeezed out alternative ways for young children to spend their time during the day, and there are no other activities which might absorb children, they naturally come to see school attendance as inevitable. Asked why she goes to school, Ruth Ottinger (38,EW,1-1) replies, "Well, I guess just about everyone goes to school...Whenever I stay home I have nothing to do."

The only alternative to school that children know is when they are sick. For most children, staying home is not an inviting prospect. As Marcy Stalton(16,Fash,1-2) points out, going to school is "better than being home and being bored. And you're not by yourself. You have more fun at school."

Kate Bullock (38,LS,1-4) also grasps the lack of alternatives to school. Would she attend school if she had the choice? "Well, sometimes I would and sometimes I wouldn't. Like if you said, 'you don't have to go to school,' and I could stay home, who would I stay home with?"

Most children take for granted the necessity to attend school. By age seven, children have absorbed the "official" explanation for the existence of schools. When asked why they attend school, most children replied that they did so to learn. There is no better proof of the meritocratic basis of our society than children's unanimous agreement on the need to learn what the shool says is worth learning.

But what is so important about learning? And why are school authorities uniquely qualified to decide what is worth learning? Children (and others) are learning all the time, in school and out. Why is some knowledge singled out for official certification? It

is unfair to expect children to answer these questions. Most children do not try. Among the reasons children gave for why learning is important was the need to be smart, to know how to read, and to advance in school. A few children see learning as a moral obligation. When Richie Gales (16,Bic,1-6) is asked what he is learning in school he says: "We're learning the school rules."

I: What are the school rules?

S: School rules that you're supposed to learn.

I: Like what?

S: Like, something like adding, subracting, and stuff like that.

Richie confuses rules governing cognitive knowledge and rules prescribing classroom comportment. His confusion is understandable, since both are subsumed in the undifferentiated demand schools make for children to comply. As Bowles and Gintis have shown, under the guise of rewarding cognitive performance, schools place a heavy premium on compliance to norms of behavior.[4]

A few children explicitly link successful performance in school to attaining other goals. Asked why learning is important, Perry Zartman (38,LS,1-2) replies, "Because if somebody wants to see, like, if you're going to take a test or something, well, you have to be smart."

For Miah Galanter (38,PL,1-1), like Perry from PS 38, "It's nice to be smart. If...you want to have a certain job, you have to know what you're gonna be talking about and everything and stuff."

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[4]Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, Schooling in Capitalist America: The Contradictions of Liberal School Reform (New York, 1976), Ch. 4.

"Put Your Heads Down"

Along with much in the social and physical world, school is imposed on children. It is presented as inevitable, not as an alternative to be accepted, rejected, or modified. Most children display an attitude of passive resignation about the necessity to attend school. An extreme illustration is provided by Jose Pabin (16, Kle,1-1) from PS 16, who says that the reason he attends school is "because we have to do homework." Asked why, he replies, "So the teacher could check it."

Nearly all children accept (at least on the verbal level) the value of hard work and compliance with school demands. This could be seen in answers to the question, "What does it take to be a good student?" For Judy Gabon (38,LS,3-8), "I think you should listen...." Heidi Rogow (38,LS,3-25), "Not get into trouble, don't fight." Rochelle Karp (38,LS,3-18), "To know the fules and follow them." Brent Flint (38,LS,3-2), "Work very hard." Linda Grant (38,LS,3-4), "Working. You have to do that the teacher says." Karol Roberts (38,LS,3-1), "You have to listen very hard. Make sure you don't miss out on any of the work by playing around and doing stuff you're not supposed to do."

Note that this monotonous litany was produced by children in an innovative nonformal classroom at PS 38. At PS 16, children enumerate even more extreme forms of passivity. Several children there gave the terse reply, when asked about the qualities needed to be a good student: "Be quiet." For Susan Curran (16,Bic,3-7), "Put your heads down when the teacher says, 'Put your heads down.'" Ricardo Aranda (16,Fash,3-2) reports that he is a good student "because I go to school and I don't fight. I don't scream in the

classroom."

Children from both schools recognize and appear to accept uncritically the value of conforming to school demands. Nonetheless, the content of the demands and rewards differs at the two schools. Children at PS 38 are rewarded for exercising initiative and imagination, whereas children at PS 16 are rewarded for mechanical compliance and passivity.

Differences in the classroom process at the two schools are reflected in children's comments. Several children at PS 16 defined a good student as one who succeeds in avoiding the teacher's displeasure. Marcy Stalton (16,Fash,3-8) observes that students "should be working and they should always be good in school so they won't get suspended. And they should always do what the teacher says because some kids do that, and when they don't do that they get reported." A principal aim of students at PS 16 seems to be to avoid the teacher's wrath. Louis Squalli (16,Fash,3-2) regards schoolwork as a means to placate the teacher. He ways that students should be "working...so the teacher won't have to holler at you."

According to Ana Fernando (16,Bic,7-7)students seem to be expiating original sin: Ana says that students make her teacher happy "when they don't do bad things." The interviewer asks, "What does she do when she's really happy?" Ana replies, "She forgives people."

It is rare for children at PS 16 to imagine that the teacher actually likes them: this would imply an intimacy between teacher and students. That does not exist there. For children at PS 16 the teacher is a distant figure. By contrast, at PS38, at least a few children mention a personal relationship to the teacher in

their definition of what makes for a good student. Kerry Ann Kinney (38,EW,3-1), for example, says that a good student is "soneone who reads fast and likes the teacher and the teacher likes them."

Several children at PS 38 mention qualities like autonomy, caring, and imagination in their definition of a good student. Nana Lupelski (38,LS,1-12) says that a good student is "supposed to be learning, thinking about things that we can do, help other people."

There is a depressing monotony in most children's replies to what they should be doing in school. If one only knew about their classroom behavior from these comments, one would gain the inaccurate impression that children are completely servile, docile, and fatalistic in class.

In their behavior, children do not conform to the dreary ideal they put forward; they are far from mechanically complying with teacher directives. In fact, a constant feature of classroom life in PS 16 (and often PS 38) consists of the teacher attempting to prevent students from enjoying each other's company and "shirking" their lessons. Children are constantly complaining, resisting, and exercising initiative, rather than simply letting the teacher dominante.

Moreover, especially at PS 38, children display an interest in class projects when the teacher provides innovative and challenging possibilities; children reveal by their actions, if not by their words, that they can be self-absorbed and independent. Yet the definitions they provide of what consitutes desirable classroom behavior places far greater emphasis on mechanical conformity.

"Three Things You Cannot Do"

It is impossible to provide a simple answer to whether children like or dislike school. When they were asked whether they liked school, most replied that they did. What they report liking most is the chance to play with friends. This is severely limited in the traditional classroom, where children are supposed to work alone or in teacher-directed groups (e.g., reading groups). It may be for this reason that playing with friends was named more frequently at PS 38 than at PS 16.

By contrast, children at PS 16 chose two aspects of school that nearly no one named at PS 38: going on trips and having a morning snack of juice or milk and cookies. There is something poignant about naming trips at all, since they occur so rarely. It is an indirect indication of the dullness of the usual classroom routine. Trips represent a break with the usual pedagogical process, in which learning is confined within the four walls of the classroom. As for finding snacks enjoyable, considering how austere they were suggests how little else there was to enjoy in the classroom. One reason snacks may have been named is that they provide an opportunity in the traditional classroom for a respite from schoolwork and the injunction that students be quiet and work along. It may also be that the gift of food has a psychological significance in a school setting where children are more accustomed to discipline than support.

In our first interview, we asked if students liked school; four fifths replied that they did. Perhaps a more revealing way to discern children's attitudes toward school is to ask them to describe their classroom and teacher. Many more children alluded

to unpleasant aspects of school life. Several criticized the general regimentation of school life. Asked what she dislikes about school, Cynthia Fuchs (16,Bic,1-3) replies, "Some of the rules."

I: What kind of rules?

S: Like you got to tell the teacher if you got to go to the bathroom

I: Why don't you like that rule?

S: Well, because if you tell the teacher that you've got to to to the bathroom, then you have to go there very badly. Any you'd have to wait if they [the teacher] were doing something else.

Asked to describe that is important about her open corridor classroom, Valery Evan (16,Bic,6-2) says, "One thing is three things you cannot do. One is don't spill paint on the floors, and two is listen to the teacher, and three is sit down when she says to."

Shara Bernhardt (38,PL,7-20) is asked, "Do you feel good when you see Pam [her teacher]?"

S: No.

I: Why not?

S: I think of her as just a teacher who bosses me around.

Many children pointed to noise and strife among children as what they disliked most in the classroom. Nava Cline says, "I hate the fighting." Brent Flint (38,LS,1-4) tells about being bullied and he says of his classroom, "It's too noisy. That's important, because...in my class most kids go home with headaches." Asked why, he replies, "Because kids are screaming."

Michael Rachmind (38,LS,1-5) says, "One thing about this school. It's one of the noisiest schools, where a lot of people screech. It's probably the noisiest public school." Asked why, he replies, "Because a lot of people, they don't try to control their temper."

What contributes to the ever-present tension and hostility in most classrooms? Perhaps the key to the mystery was provided by Kerry Ann Kinney (38,EW,6-1), from PS38, who speculates that children fight in her classroom "because they don't want to go to school. They think it's terrible. The only way they can get out of their anger is beat up on other kids." Arnold Birar (38,LS, 5-20), also from PS38, agrees. Asked why children fight in school, he says, "Because they get angry. And if they're angry at somebody else, they don't know what to do."

Most children at the two schools appear resigned to school, accepting its demands in lukewarm fashion. There appears to be more genuine enjoyment at PS 38, where children seemed more animated and cheerful. However, with the exception of Pam's classroom, where the teacher exerted strong discipline and constraint, the great freedom of the open classroom may have also made possible the expression of greater tension and irritability among children.

Philip Jackson found that children's feelings about school are confined to a relatively narrow range, given the boring routine nature of schools and "the inevitable (sic) mismatch between individual desires and institutional goals."[4]

"She's Worse Than Any of the Nightmares"

A small number of children appear totally alienated from school. Their harsh judgments do not reflect the views of most students. But their remarks illustrate in an extreme form what many students said in a more mild way. These children were frequently singled out by others as troublemakers. They bullied other children, disrupted

[4]Jackson, op.cit., pp. 60-61. Jackson reviews studies of children's attitudes toward school, pp.37ff, and notes the dearth of studies dealing with this issue. They find, as I do, that children's negative feelings revolve around the teacher's and other students' insensitivity and cruelty, as well as the boredom of the school routine

the class, provoked the teacher, and refused to study. An extreme case in an open corridor classroom at PS 16 was Juan. Students complained bitterly that Juan would come into a small group and disrupt its activities. I saw him snatch an airplane that one boy had been laboriously making and smash it underfoot. Many children named Juan when asked if there was anyone they didn't like in class. Toward the end of the school year, he provoked the transformation of two classrooms. Because he succeeded in disrupting his own classroom and driving his teacher to distraction, Juan and several other children were transferred into a third grade classroom next to his second grade classroom; several children from the third grade class were transferred into his former classroom. Teachers hoped that the presence of older boys would subdue Juan. However, it did not work. Juan remained the class bully. On a class outing, he apparently insulted and kicked the student teacher. He was suspended from school for two weeks and then transferred to a bilingual classroom run by a strict teacher. When we observed him in this class, he appeared relaxed and restrained; he confided to us that he was much happier here, for no one did any work in the open corridor classes.

When asked why Juan misbehaved, Toya Berston, Juan's classmate from the second-third grade open corridor classroom, speculates,

S: Because he wasn't raised the right way. He takes after his big brother. His big brother does anything. He even mugged somebody.

I: I see. How does that happen, that kids sometimes mug people?

S: That's the way they come up, and they see it on TV so they try to be like it. And one of these days when Juan is real big he's going to try it and get caught.

I: Oh, gosh, how does that make you feel? Do you feel bad about it?

S: No, because he deserves it...Maybe I feel sorry for the other person. But not for him.

Dennis Kove, at PS 38 was another class rebel. Unlike most children in his class, he was from a working class background: his father was a truck driver. He is white and he formed an alliance wtih two Hispanic children in his class to bully the other children. There was a running feud between Dennis and his teacher: she didn't miss an opportunity to berate him and he revealed to us a variety of schemes he had carried out or was devising to disrupt the class. (For example, he planned to set off a stinkbomb.) Dennis' teacher asked what he told us about her: she said that she hoped to obtain information that would be helpful in dealing with him. If she feared what Dennis might tell us about her, her suspicions were amply justified.

Asked in his first interview what he would change in his classroom if he could, he replied, (1-3), "I would get rid of Pam." In a later interview hewas asked if there was anyone in the classroom he didn't like (4-7): "There's a lot--all the girls, some of the boys. The person I hate the most is Pam." Asked why he didn't get along with her, he says, "I just don't. She's always screaming at me."

I: Yeah, and why do you think she does?

S: I don't know.

During this interview, he ventures, (4-4) "She just screams."

I: I see. Okay. Does Pam scream more than other teachers do you think?

S: Yes.

I: Why do you think she does?

S: I don't think she does because she can holler...She's worse than any of the nightmares.

Dennis' opposition to his teacher is far from total, despite his brave talk. Although he was allied with the two tough Hispanic boys in the class, several children told me Dennis bribed them with candy to gain their friendship. Moreover, his two allies sometimes turned on him with disastrous results. I witnessed one incident in which Dennis came running to his teacher for protection and, sobbing, snuggled up to her and put his head in her lap.

Not all children designated as troublemakers and rebels display total opposition to school. Anthony Santana, another member of the trio in Pam's class often singled out as a troublemaker, says he likes school and describes Pam as follows, "She's a good teacher. She talks to us about not fighting, not hitting, not kicking, not running in the hallways when lunchtime is over." These are all among Anthony's favorite pastimes.

Even more poignant is that Anthony rates being well behaved as the most desirable of four possible personal characteristics. When asked why, he rplies (38,PL,1-3), "I like to help people. I don't like to fight, beating people." He also says that it is never all right to break a rule.

Thus, Anthony seems to exaggerate the virtue of obedience at the same time that he among the most disobedient students in PS 38. In this contradiction, we can discern an anguish probably shared by most of the children labelled troublemakers.

Don Kirkland is another boy who is highly critical of his teacher. When asked what he doesn't like about her, he replies, "Everything."

I: That's pretty inclusive.

S: I hate her.

He describes his teacher as "a wicked witch...She screams her head off." (16,Kr9,1-5) When asked if he likes school, he replies, "Who likes it?...I hate it." (1-2)

Don's unhappiness in school is connected to other sources. He is an adopted child, his foster parents are divorced, and he is receiving therapy.

A few children totally alienated from the classroom were not bullies or rebels but were isolated and withdrawn from class activities. Sam Lackley regards himself as a victim of the class shift provoked by Jose described above. His best friends were all moved into the other class and he stayed by himself for the rest of that year and the following fall, when our interview took place.

Sam is asked what he likes about his teacher, (16,Kro,1-4) "That's a hard question. (pause) Almost nothing."

I: What don't you like about her? Anything in particular?

S: Well, there's only one thing I don't like about her. In one word I want to tell you what I don't like about her.

I: What is that?

S: Everything.

Sam stayed by himself most of the day, downcast and brooding.

Andrei Sarkhov is another alienated student. In his first interview, Andrei says that he hates school (38,PL,1-1) and that it "stinks" because there is "too much work." Asked to describe his teacher, he says that "she stinks, she makes you do work too much. Yeah, she makes you work too much." Asked what he doesn't like about Pam, he says, "I just hate her." When he is asked in

a later interview what he would do if his teacher announced an arbitrary rule, he replies, "I'd go,'goddam you, fucking Pam.'" And he says about his teacher, "She's a fucker, she's a bitch." (4-1) When asked how he feels when his teacher is unhappy, "I don't know. I hope, I hope she stays unhappy." (7-10)

I: Why

S: Because I don't like her.

I: Why don't you like her?

S: Too bossy.

I: She's too bossy?

S: Yeah.

The alienated children named by others as troublemakers and bullies were virtually all boys. It is rare to find a girl who is singled out as a bully or a boss (although Toya Berston is an exception, partly because of her height and strength.) Girls seem to act out their unhappiness in class in another way-- by being even more submissive and docile.

Conclusion

The traditional classroom, where students are expected to work side by side but are prohibited from talking to each other, is inherently frustrating. Children are asked to isolate themselves despite the proximity of thirty other children and one (often raucous) adult. Under these conditions, what is surprising about most classrooms is not the extent of conflict, noise and recrimination, but their relative absence.

Although students single out conflict and school work as unpleasant, their comments suggest a general acceptance of schools

and compliance. The small number of class rebels and bullies only underscores that most children are relatively docile in school. The political message in this situation is that children are asked to accept as normal and inevitable a situation that is confining, harsh, and unpleasant.

Although children from the two schools provide similar analyses of the necessity for compliance in school, there is a contrast in their attitudes. No student at PS 38 was reduced to the boundless servility of suggesting that being a good student means to "put your head down when the teacher says, 'Put your heads down.'"

THE TEACHER'S ANGER

Introduction

Because the teacher is the first "official" representative of the outside world with whom children have extensive personal contact, the image of the teacher is an important element in the social world children construct. The elementary school teacher represents a transition from the world of the family and primary socialization to the "outside" world and secondary socialization.

There is surprisingly little information on how children perceive their teacher. Most books on teaching and schools deal with the observer's descriptions of the classroom or report classroom life through the teacher's eyes.

Granted it is not easy to understand how children regard their teacher. They may be reluctant to discuss their feelings, and they lack the vocabulary to do so in an elaborate way. Yet children's accounts of their teacher are eloquent in suggesting the teacher's importance for them.

In order to understand how children conceptualize the teacher's role, they were asked to describe their teacher to someone who didn't know her, what they liked and disliked about their teacher, and what the teacher is supposed to do in the classroom. They were also asked to pretend to be the teacher on the first day of school and in a number of conflictual situations.

What stands out most about children's attitudes toward their teacher is a contradiction between their near-universal distress at the teacher's anger and their exonerating the teacher from blame on the grounds that children misbehave. Although in virtually every classroom, children allude to the teacher's yelling, yet most

children passively accept the teacher's domination; only a few children overtly criticize the teacher's temper. Thus children side with the teacher against other children and themselves.

Children at the two schools differ considerably in their views of the teacher's role and in how they portray their own imagined behavior as teacher. Children at PS 16 project a harsh demanding teacher and, when they describe how they would be as teacher or mimic their own teacher, they emphasize the teacher's severity. Students at PS 38 describe a teacher who is sympathetic, flexible, and permissive. Thus, although children from both schools share distress at the teacher's arbitrary actions, children from PS 38 draw on their experience in the classroom to visualize teachers as more than disciplinarians. The contrasting worlds of the classrooms in the two schools are reflected and even amplified in the children's words. Schools appear to tell students that they should accept arbitrary authority as legitimate, but schools for the middle class convey an additional message which tempers this severity. Children sensitively reflect their experiences; by age seven or eight, children from different social class backgrounds and different schools display quite different social orientations.

"When She Yells, My God,
The Whole Class Moves a Step Back"

The need for teachers to intervene frequently to restrain children is inherent in a situation where many children are forced to congregate in one room much of the day. But there is a fundamental distinction (even if it may be difficult to establish in practice) between a teacher intervening in a rational manner to restore classroom order and a teacher who contributes to the disorder under the guise of exercising discipline.

They are placed in an irrational situation and expectations are imposed on them which are virtually impossible to meet. With few checks on their power within the classroom itself, whatever the large contraints outside it, the result is that the arbitrary exercise of power by most teachers is woven into the texture of life in the classrooms: schools "instruct" children in being dominated by those who are often irrascible, unreasonable, and cruel.

Children frequently describe yelling by the teacher as one of the features of schools they dislike most. A few resort to extreme language using words like nightmare, screaming, witch to refer to the teacher. The more subdued language of most children is striking in another way.

In our conversations with children, there is a litany of allusions to the teacher's yelling. Nearly every child mentioned it, although few were as explicit as the following students.

Heidi Rogow (38,LS,1-3) says, "Laura's always shouting at people...That's what I don't like about school. She always shouting at me."

I: I see. Does she shout too often?

S: Yeah, she shouts every day.

Asked to describe his teacher, Sam Lackley (16,Fash,1-20) says, "Well first of all, sometimes really yelly."

Cynthia Fuchs (16,Bic,1-20) is asked, "Could you say something the way Ms. Beckworth says it?"

S: No.

I: Why not?

S: It would be too loud.

Asked to describe her teacher, Shara Bernhardt (38,PL,1-5) says, "She wears skirts, she has short hair, and sometimes she yells at people who aren't quiet."

I: What do you feel about this?

S: It interrupts me while I'm reading.

Shara adds, "In a New Year's promise, she said that she won't yell, and she always yells."

Describing the same teacher, Jerry Rogow (38,PL,1-12) says, "Sometimes she sounds, she shouts so loud it almost blows the roof off the ceiling." Carol Lapport (38,PL,3-12), also in Pam's class, reports, "When she yells, my God, the whole class, like when she yells at someone, the whole class moves a step back."

Nara Cline (16,Kro,7-5) says that when her teacher Ms. Kraft, is angry, "her face turns red. And she starts yelling."

Marcy Stalton recalls Ms. Kraft the previous year, "Well, in the second grade, everybody used to leave their pencils (home) and the teacher would say, 'You forgot to bring your pencils, you forgot to bring your pencil.' And she would scream and she would turn red."

Susan Curran (16,Bic,3-20) says that what she doesn't like about school is, "When the teacher starts yelling."

I: Why don't you like that?

S: 'Cause it gives me a headache, that's why.

Asked what the teacher's job is, Susan replies: "Teach yelling."

S: Yeah...teach kids how to yell, because she's always yelling her brains off.

Michael Falco (16,Kle,1-20) innocently suggests the limited repertoire of his teacher. After saying that when there is a fight in the classroom, his teacher yells, he is asked: "Does she ever do anything other than yell?" "Yup," he replies, "she screams."

"That Doesn't Sound Like Any Teacher at All to Me"

Several children noted that the teacher's shouting was reminiscent of home life. Jerry Rogow (38,PL,1-12) says that what he likes least about his teacher is "When she shouts...I don't like people to shout...I'm used to it, though, because my mother shouts a lot."

Kennie Barton (38,LS,1-5) suggests that his teacher is "too loud." "What do you mean by that? What does she do?"

S: She yells.

I: I see. Why does she yell do you think?

S: She yells like my mother.

For Susan Curran (16,Bic,1-20) there is the same connection between a loud mother and a loud teacher. Asked to describe her teacher she replies, "She has sort of gray hair, and she yells a lot."

I: She yells a lot, yeah, And what else?

S: And she tells the kids what to do. And what not to do. Like a mother.

I: Do you think she's like a mother?

S: Uh huh.

I: In what way is she like a mother?

S: When she yells, that doesn't sound like any teacher at all to me.

"You Can't Change Human Nature"

Fewer students at PS 16 than at PS 38 mentioned the teacher's shouting despite the fact that teachers at PS 16 yell far more frequently. One reason may be that at PS 16, children are so over whelmed that few perceive the teacher's yelling as salient. Children at PS 16 apparently have been taught to have such low expectations that they see nothing untoward about the teacher's harshness. At PS 38, children hold the teacher to higher standards. That more students at PS 38 focus on the teacher's yelling is offhand testimony to the school's success in encouraging students to develop critical standards.

One of the most closely guarded secrets of schools is the violence that occurs there. I am not alluding to the occasional violence which results in physical injury to students or teachers; few schools are Blackboard Jungles.

Lurid accounts of the most desperate schools may dull sensibilities about the majority of schools.[1] If there is rarely violence that requires a physician's care in the two schools I studied, there is violence nonetheless--occasional violence to the body and frequent violence to the spirit. Regarding physical violence, I witnessed or was told about cases in virtually every classroom of the teacher using superior force on students. It ranged from the teacher pushing a child into a chair or twisting his ear to occasions when children were dragged to the principal's office, sobbing and hysterical. Students told of teachers using corporal punishment, like spanking and washing out a child's mouth with soap.

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[1]In a similar way, accounts of the Soviet Union can be used to minimize injustice in America.

Yelling by the teacher is a more prevalent form of violence. In this case, the teacher does not use her body but her voice to subdue and intimidate children. Shouting by the teacher occurs in every classroom. It was only after several visits to a classroom that I began to witness the teacher beginning to "be herself" and, in fact, for this reason it became untenable for my research assistants and myself to remain long in that classroom.

What is the significance of the teacher's yelling? One result is that children become unwitting accomplices to the guilty secret of schools. Not all children referred to the teacher's yelling--yet all should have on the basis of my observations. Indeed, the few children we interviewed in the classroom of Ms. Klein, the most abusive teacher, hardly mentioned the teacher's yelling and tantrums.

The principal of PS 16 discussed with me the problem of yelling and expressed sympathy for the plight of students: "I think the teachers don't have to be so harsh. I sometimes tell them but it makes them irritated and only lasts for awhile. Then, after two weeks, water finds its level. But I don't know what children could possibly do that justifies such screaming. Sometimes I hear it walking down the hall...Once I was in the room with a visitor from_____ University. The teacher was standing right next to a little boy and yelling in his ear. I walked over to her and said, 'Why do you need to shout? He'll hear you without it.' It may work for a few weeks but then they (the teachers) start again. You can't change human nature."

Thus, the "human nature" of teachers is imposed on children.

"It Makes Me Feel Bad"

Children seek, usually without help, to make sense of the teacher's yelling. Andy Sprectum (38,LS,3-20) describes what may be a typical process of habituation to the teacher's yelling: "I don't usually like it. But I'm used to it. And I've been in school almost three years."

I: Does that (teacher's yelling) happen in most classrooms?

S: Yeah. The first class it happened the most and then it got better and now it's okay.

Yet many children remain disturbed by the teacher's disapproval and yelling. Cynthia Fuchs (16,Bic,7-4) says that the teacher yells at her because she makes mistakes. "What kind of mistakes?"

S: I forgot, I forgot.

I: You can't think of the last time she yelled at you?

S: I can, but I don't want to say it.

I: You don't want to say it?

S: I don't - it makes me feel bad.

Richie Gailes (16,Bic,5-5) in the same class as Cynthia, is asked: "Does it (teacher's yelling) bother you? He answers, "Yeah, sure it bothers me, even when she's not yelling at me... Because it startles me."

I: It startles you?

S: Yeah.

I: What do you mean?

S: Well, I'm doing something like, if I'm not looking, she starts yelling at somebody, like sometimes it makes me jump.

"Because We're Bad, That's Why She Yells.
We're Always Bad."

Children rate the teacher's anger and disapproval as among the most disturbing aspects of school. How do they account for it? Nearly without exception, children exempt the teacher from responsibility. Some, like Shara Bernhardt (38,PL,4-3) regard it stoically. Asked why the teacher yells, Shara says, "I have no idea. Just her character."

Andy Spectrum (38,LS,3-20) points to a spiral of teacher and student strife. Asked what the teacher does about fighting, he says, "Oh, she screams, sometimes she does wrong things, like she's too nervous, and then she screams at the whole class because there's too much fighting."

I: Why does she get too nervous?

S: Because she's already too nervous, because everybody's fighting.

Likewise, Cynthia Fuchs (16,Bic,7-2) explains the teacher's irrascibility as a product of student misbehavior and the teacher's temperament. After saying the teacher yells a lot, she is asked: "Why do you think she yells so much?"

S: Because the kids are being bad, and also she has a big, bad temper, and the kids sometimes are very, very bad.

I: Do you ever talk to her about it?

S: No, sir.

I: Why not?

S: Because then she would scream at me...Sometimes I ask... I tell her something, she screams at me.

Most children focus on students exclusively in accounting for the teacher's yelling. Rather than blaming the teacher for her bad temper, they attribute responsibility to children's misdeeds. Raoul Cordo (16,Ploro,7-1) says that his teacher "screams at everybody...they are bad children." Jose Cordero (16,Ploro,3-15), in the same class, explains the teacher's yelling by saying, "Some of the kids are bad." A third boy in the class, Jose Roman (16,Ploro,7-1) explains that the teacher yells "because the kids do something bad. And then the class talks a lot and she has to scream." For Michael Falco (16,Kle,7-1), in Ms. Klein's traditional class at PS 16, (the harshest teacher I observed), the teacher yells "because everybody's bad, everybody in the whole class." In an earlier interview, Michael says the teacher yells when "the children make her get mad." (1-3)

Nara Cline (16,Kro,3-20) among the most detached critical students at PS 16, mimicks her teacher by shouting, "Shut up.' But then, it's just hard to keep those bad kids from being bad." For Louis Squalli (16,Fash,3-2) the teacher "hollers" (his word) because "some people do't do their work." He doesn't see how his teacher could holler less, for "she sees some people not doing their work."

Carol Lapport (38,PL,3-12) says that her teacher yells a lot because "people are bad and stuff." Among the reasons she gives is that children leave candy wrappers around, children talk while the teacher is talking, and "kids don't do what she tells them to do; that makes her yell."

Kathy Cline (16,Fash,7-5) says that her teacher yells a lot "to the children that are bad...because they do something bad."

Asked for a description of his teacher Richie Gales (16,Bic,1-8), a first grader at PS 16, says that she is "loud."

I: Why do you think she's loud?

S: Because of the kids in the class.

I: Do you think she yells a lot?

S: Yes.

I: Why do you think she yells a lot?

S: Because a lot of the kids in her class are bad. Like she really gets mad and she yells a lot. When she finds things that are missing. (This teacher was extremely disturbed when classroom equipment was not put in its proper place.)

Nicky Karthen (16,Bic,3-20) in the same class at PS 16, says about his teacher, "Sometimes I don't like her."

I: Why don't you like her sometimes?

S: Because she yells.

I: Okay. And what does she yell about?

S: At people.

I: Why does she yell at them?

S: Because they were bad.

I: I see. Does she ever yell at someone who's not bad?

S: No.

When Rich Kirkland (16,Bic,1-5) in the same first grade classroom at PS 16 is asked if there is anything he doesn't like about his teacher, he replies, "She screams."

I: Why does she scream?

S: Because some people are bad.

Most of the children quoted who thus blame students for the teacher's yelling are from PS 16. Many children from PS 38, however, agree that the responsibility for the teacher's yelling can be ascribed to student misconduct. Heidi Rogow (38,LS,3-20) says that her teacher "shouts every day...because the kids are always talking. And kids are screaming and when everyone's trying to read and work, do math and work."

Rochelle Karp (38,LS,1-7) is asked if the teacher is ever wrong to yell: "She always yells for a reason. She has to, otherwise everything would be going cuckoo in our classroom."

Children engage in circular reasoning in which the teacher is exonerated from blame for yelling because of the gravity of student misdeeds. Yet they measure the extent of student culpability by the extent of teacher yelling. Thus, Harriet Boston (38,LS,1-5) says that she doesn't like the teacher's yelling.

I: Why do you think the teacher does yell?

S: Because we're bad, that's why she yells. We're always bad.

I: You think so? Think you're bad?

S: We're bad. We know we're bad. When we're yelled at, we know we're bad.

I: Well, how do you know it?

S: Because Laura yells at us.

Children thus explain and excuse the teacher's yelling-- despite the distress it causes them --on the grounds that it is a rational response to student actions. Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg suggest that children at an early stage of moral development judge

the morality of acts by their external consequences, rather than the intentions of those concerned: an action is immoral if it entails punishment. This process seems to be occurring here. The teacher's yelling is regarded as evidence of student guilt.

Yet in actuality the causal sequence could be reversed: one might claim with equal validity that student "misbehavior" is a product of teacher constraint, provocation, and misbehavior. Students are "bad" in part because they are compelled to suffer conditions that encourage behavior that certain teachers define as bad. Furthermore, teachers frequently express anger not as a rational means to prevent or punish student transgressions but because they are out of control. In some classes, teachers misbehave more than students. Nevertheless, most children blame themselves for the teacher's misbehavior; few perceive the possibility of criticizing the teacher.

"There's Only Rules for Kids;
There's No Rules for the Teachers"

The major basis for evaluating students within American classrooms, both in students' cognitive achievement and compliance with school rules, is as individuals. Each student is evaluated separately on his "merits." American students thus resent being evaluated on a group basis, the typical method of evaluation in the elementary schools in the Soviet Union. Moreover, since individual evaluation is so important in the United States, students are vigilent that the teacher make accurate judgments about individual students.[2]

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[2]Urie Bronfenbrenner, Two Worlds of Childhood.

Cynthia Fuchs (16,Bic,1-3) seems puzzled and angry when she perceives her teacher shifting to rewards on a group rather than individual level. "My teacher always yells at us....Some of the people but not us, we do what she says. But some people don't do what she says." Several children expressed indignation that the teacher yelled at the wrong person when there was a fight.

Some children challenge the teacher's legitimacy in a more subtle manner. They mount a campaign of passive resistence and appear to ignore her threats and yelling. This seemed quite common in the most punitive teacher's classroom, where students went quietly about their work despite the teacher's constant shouting. Her loud voice seemed to form a constant backdrop to class activities. I observed one boy who continued to work impassively as Ms. Klein yelled six inches from his ear: "You stop doing that. I'm not going to take that stuff from you." The several children we interviewed from this classroom said very little about the teacher's yelling. Perhaps because she yelled constantly children ceased to hear her.

Fantasy is another form of passive evasion. Nicky Karthen (16,Bic,1-5) says that he likes to be punished by being forced to sit in the corner because "I can tell myself a Roddy and Neddy story."

I: What's a Roddy and Neddy story?

S: It's about me and my brother...And we have a big game, in the story.

A small minority of children attempt to protect themselves from the teacher's displeasure more forcefully. One method is through fantisizing confrontation and rebellion. Susan Curran (16,Bic,2-1)

describes how her teacher makes up rules in the classroom: "She thinks of the things that she doesn't want the kids to do, and says, 'don't do this.' But she also yells her head off."

I: Are you happy with this way of making rules?

S: Well, actually, N-O.

I: Why not.

S: Because the teacher yells too much...I want to make some rules myself.

I: You do? What kind of rules would you make.

S: No yelling from the teacher. Let the kids do what they want. And don't let the teacher yell at you.

Jerry Rogow (38,PL,1-12) discusses his quarrels with the teacher: "Sometimes I want to go patch it up. But I never get the chance, I'm afraid to. One of these days I am."

...I: And what do you think will happen?

S: I don't care, I don't know what would happen. I think she'd just be so humiliated, she wouldn't say anything.

I: And how would you feel?

S: Well, I'd feel glad that I finally said it. (giggles)

Rita Narrenzo (38,BB,3-14) has achieved some self protection by judging the teacher's yelling to be irrational. When asked if her teacher's yelling is the best way to deal with problems in class, she replies,

S: No, if you yell, then it gets someone madder...Like when she tells me to read and I didn't hear her. And the next time she tells me to read, I want to do something else.

Arnold Berman (38,BB,7-1) distinguishes between occasions when the teacher's yelling is justified and when it is not. He suggests

that the teacher should first ask students to clean up. If "they don't clean it up, then she could yell...Because sometimes the first moment she yells, when nobody even has time to clean up."

Karen Bullock (38,LS,3-5) displays stoical acceptance of her teacher's anger along with critical distance. Referring to her teacher she says, "And so she screams at us, and so she's making more noise than us." Asked how this can happen she replies, "Well, I don't know. Somehow the teachers have permission to do whatever they want...And the kids don't."

According to Karen, it is unjust that teachers have greater privileges because of their status. She observes, "There's only rules for kids. There's no rules for Lilly...And it's not fair to the kids...like, it's if you're going, you know, there's no talking in the stairways, and they (other students) trip you. Like we're not, we have to keep our mouths shut, and the teachers talk to other teachers. And it's not fair to us."

I: I see. Why is that?

S: Because they're the teachers I guess.

More than any other child interviewed, Ruth Ottinger appears to have reflected about her teacher's arbitrary actions and to have developed a position of critical detachment toward her. Ruth seems unique among all students in having achieved a measure of control over her teacher (38,EW,1-7):

S: This week it's been really hard because she's had a virus and she got mad at a lot of kids. She got very mad at me a lot for no reason. And so I always get upset when people get mad at me for no reason.

I: What did she say was the reason?

S: Well, today she said she had a virus so not to be upset.

I: I see. She apologized you mean?

S: Yeah, she told the whole class that too.

I: I see.

S: But at least, I understand her and I hope that it doesn't happen any more. It's just that when it happens it just drives me up a wall. She gets mad at me when someone wants to play with me. I just have a terrible time.

Ruth describes (1-8) how she challenged her teacher. "Like Susan. Something happens and Errestine (her teacher) gets mad at her. I always go up to Errestine and say, 'Errestine, what did you get mad at her for?' Because sometimes she gets mad at her for reasons that Susan doesn't know. And so I just say, 'okay, well just try not to get mad at her.'"

I: You tell that to Errestine?

S: Yeah. Because Susan doesn't like it. Nor do I.

I: Yeah, but that's good that you tell that to Errestine, that you try to change her from doing that. That's courageous.

S: I think it's working a little. And she told other people in the class to tell her too.

In comparing children, we are also comparing teachers, and schools. It would be inconceivable to imagine the above dialogue occurring at PS 16, both because children there would never mount a direct hallenge to teachers, and because teachers would not tolerate such a challenge to their authority.

Although only several children among all who were interviewed achieved a critical perspective regarding the teacher's actions, nearly everyone was from PS 38. All of the last five children quoted, the most thoughtful in their ability to evaluate the teacher's actions, are from PS 38.

More significant than the occasional child who criticizes the teacher is that most children do not. On the contrary, they apparently seek to justify behavior that is both distressing to them and often indefensible. In the process,children become accomplices in the conspiracy of silence that surrounds the arbitrary exercise of teacher authority. (In the same way, children often become unwilling accomplices in guilty and violent family secrets.)

Schools provide lessons in the acceptable exercise of authority. Elementary school teachers are at the intersection between familial and public authority. Children learn from the teacher's example what those in authority can do. Because they see few external checks on the teacher's authority, most children seem to conclude that they, and not the teacher, are to blame in the event of a conflict.

Although most students at both schools appear to accept the teacher's arbitrary actions, at least a few students at PS 38 adopt a critical position. In part this is because, if teachers at PS 38 often act in as arbitrary and unfair a way as do teachers from PS 16, they are also more relaxed in their demands and less intractable. I did not observe any instances at PS 16 where a teacher apologized to students.) As a result of being encouraged to take initiative, calling their teacher by her first name, and working in groups independently of the teacher, students at PS 38 are somewhat more able to develop a critical perspective.

Young children are distressed by the teacher's arbitrary actions yet attribute responsibility to other students and themselves. Rather than this being the result of their age or stage of development, it might be due to the situations in which children are placed. There is usually little possibility of developing an independent position from which the misdeeds of teachers could be regarded as a result of teachers' rather than students' offenses. If students are not provided with adequate intellectual and other resources to challenge teachers, their acquiescence becomes more understandable.

Moreover, although all children share a subordinate position, the extent of their dependence varies with their social class background. Children from the middle class experience a more resilient environment and are more able to obtain the resources to confront authority. Children from the lower class are doubly disadvantaged in dealing with authority. They are less able to obtain the intellectual tools to understand their situation, the same intellectual tools which middle class authorities respect. Further, they live in an environment where authorities are less responsive and more antagonistic to them. The disparity between children of different class backgrounds is thus manifested, actualized, and reinforced through the experience of school, particularly the relationship between the child and teacher.

IMAGES OF THE TEACHER

Whether children attend a school that is rigid and traditional or innovative and open, they are uniformly disturbed by the teacher's anger. Yet this does not mean children do not perceive differences among teachers. When asked to describe an imaginary teacher, children create a near replica of their own teacher. The sharp contrast between teachers at the two schools I studied, is reflected in children's descriptions of the teacher's role.

Children at PS 16 view the teacher as a stern taskmistress, whose job is to assign work and discipline children. When they are invited to mimick the teacher, they outdo their own teacher in severity. Children from PS 38, are more likely to describe a teacher's job as one of helping students; the disciplinary aspect of teaching is mentioned less frequently.

The school provides a daily model of political authority and most children, regardless of class background, accept the inevitability and legitimacy of the teacher's authority. Schools teach children what to expect from those in authority, and the message is very different for children from different class backgrounds. Children's comments reflect these different messages.

P.S. 16: "Give Us the Cookie"

Students at PS 16 rarely portray the teacher as humane or interested in children. For Valery Evan (16,Bic,3-7) the teacher's job is to "tell us what to do." What kinds of things? "She supposed to tell us to go somewhere and work something and when we go on a trip, and she used to tell us, 'don't do nothing until I tell you.'"

For Don Kirkland (16,Kro,3-4) the teacher is supposed to "be a big fat boss." This means that she "tells you what to do. Turns off the lights and screams her head off." Several students at PS 16 describe the teacher's job as checking homework.

Herman Varga (16,Kro,3-20) says that the teacher is "supposed to tell us to sit down and give us the cookie and tell us to stand up and tell her what we doing. And go back to what we was doing." Herman is describing a situation where the child appears totally dependent on the teacher. The image that he presents is of a docile domestic, working in an orderly, quiet manner, waiting for the teacher's directions, providing a report of work accomplished, and then returning to work without difficulty.

Herman represents in an extreme form what many children at PS 16 described. Children are in school to work, although the underlying rationale is unclear. The nature of the tasks to be performed are determined by the teacher; and they are usually mechanical and repetitive.

Most children at PS 16 see the teacher as a severe disciplinarian assigning mechanical tasks which students mechanically execute. The image that comes to mind is of the assembly line, and the hierarchical factory seems an apt image to describe PS 16.

P.S. 38: "She's Supposed to Give Us Ideas About Things"

Children at PS 38 frequently portray the teacher as a helper. Jerry Rogow (38,P1,3-20), quite critical of the teacher's yelling, nonetheless says that he likes school because "my teacher makes it fun...She makes things into a game...We study different parts of the

United States...Every week we study a different country and at the end of the week we celebrate by having the food from that country."

Nana Lipsky (38,LS,1-12) says that the teacher is "supposed to help people...She's supposed to give us ideas about things. So we know what to do. And she gives us ideas for activities by putting up things that we can do."

When children are asked what a teacher is supposed to do, most reply by describing their own teacher's actions. The richer possibilities provided students at PS 38 are reflected in their descriptions. The close connection between children's idealized model of a teacher and their perception of their own teacher occurs when children are asked to describe how they would act as teacher in a number of hypothetical situations. Students at PS 38 were likely to portray a teacher who was permissive, imaginative, and generous; students at PS 16 portrayed a harsh authoritarian teacher who was even more severe than their own teachers.

P.S. 16: "She Gets Mad, She Talks Mad"

Asked what he would do if he were teacher and a student forgot to bring a pencil and notebook to class, Sam Lackley (16,Kro,3-20) replies, "Well, I don't know if I would do the same thing as our teacher did, but I would probably. I would probably yell at him for awhile, and tell him, 'next time, I'm not going to bring a pencil.'"

Many students at PS 16 would send a child who forgot his pencil or notebook to the principal's office. When Peter Tharis (16,Kle,4-9) is asked what he would do as teacher if he saw a student reading

during an arithmetic lesson, he says, "You better stop reading the book until the teacher's finished." Why? "Because they don't want people getting ahead of the teacher." Peter's opinion about proper teacher and student comportment clearly derives from his own classroom experience: I witnessed an incident where his teacher was furious when a child read beyond the assigned passage in the reading book.

Asked what she would do if she were a teacher and a student wanted to play during a math lesson, Wanda Pelton (16,Ploro,3-20) replies that she would suspend the student, call the child's mother and "tell your mommy to hit you." She predicts that the mother would hit the student "for being a bad girl." Other students at PS 16 also seem to perceive their parents as favoring the harsh treatment doled out by the teacher.

The days of rote punishment are not over: Michael Falco (16,Kle,4-5), would punish two children who were fighting by making them write, "I must not fight," one hundred times. Children at PS 16 often prescribed severe punishment, e.g., suspending a child from school or sending him to the principal, for relatively minor infractions like reading a book during a math lesson or forgetting to bring paper and pencil to school.

As a result of their personal experience, children at PS 16 view schools, as severe, forbidding institutions. When they are invited to be a teacher, their responses suggest that they see the situation as inevitable and acceptable. Asked to pretend he is teacher on the first day of school, Peter Tharis (16,Kle,7-1) would "teach them (students) how to read and spell. And make headings." Why? "So they learn."

On the first day of school, Toya Berston (16,Fash,7-1) says that if she were the teacher she would be "nice. The week after I'd be just like Mrs. Fashbirder."

I: What does that mean?

S: Evil.

I: Why would you be nice the first week? Why would you be like Mrs. Fashbirder--evil--the second week?

S: First I got to get used to the kids, see what they like and if bad, I'd scold them. If they're good, be nice to 'em. If they be good to me, I'd be nice. If they be mean, I'd be evil to them.

I: In what way would they be mean to you that would make you be evil?

S: Because I wouldn't like bad children.

I: What do you mean by bad children?

S: Like kids that throw bottles and act fresh to the teacher and things like that. I wouldn't like it. If they ever acted fresh to me, I'd be just as mean as I could.

I: How would you be mean? What would you do?

S: When they do something bad or say something nasty, I'd say, 'come down to the principal.' Or get them suspended. And or else put them in the back of the room. And don't let them disturb the class.

Don Kirkland (16,Kro,3-20) says that on the first day of school, he'd be "mean." Why? "Cause she's mean(referring to his teacher). She's mean with us all the time."

Nicky Kartner (16,Bic,7-1) pretends he is his first grade teacher on the first day of school: "Get out of here...Okay, you sit for the rest of the day."

Asked to pretend she is teacher on the first day of school, Jane Thompson (16,Bic,7-1) says she would be "angry."

I: Why would you be angry?

S: Angel might do something to Gilbert.

... I: Say anything you want the way Ms. Bickworth would say it.

S: Sit...sit!

... I: Tell me something Ms. Bickworth says all the time. Say it just the way she says it.

S: She gets mad, she talks mad.

Anthony Rodres (16,Ploro,7-1) playing teacher on the first day of school, says he would "give them math. And make them all say, 'I won't be late.'"

Michael Falco (16,Kle,7-1), "I would tell them to be good. If they don't be good, they won't get a cookie and some milk."

I: Pretend that I'm the class.

S: Okay, 'You be bad. You bad again, I'm gonna punish you or you can't have no free time.'

Even in the open corridor classes at PS 16, it was rare to find a student who protrayed a permissive teacher. Norma Cline (16,Kro,7-1) is an exception; if she were teacher on the first day of school she would "let them walk around the classroom and get used to the classroom."

When children at PS 16 describe their own imagined actions as teacher, the results are usually even more eloquent and depressing than when they describe their own teacher. In the grim world that they create--or reproduce from the materials of their own world as students--the teacher deals with even the smallest infraction by

sending a child to the principal or expelling him or her from school. When children at PS 16 assume the teacher's role, they act even more harsh and severe than their own teacher. They describe with great relish how they would emphasize work,lavishly, dole out punishment, and create a perfectly ordered hell.

These young children enjoy playing teacher. But the use they make of the opportunity is to impose on others the abuses which they have suffered. This is not to claim that they would necessarily act as harshly as they talk. But they are apparently unable to provide the materials from their own experience and imagination to create a more humane world in the classroom.

Perhaps students ar PS 16 project such a harsh picture of the teacher because, at this age and stage of development, children emphasize compliance and punishment, rather than autonomy. According to Jean Piaget's theory of moral development, young children judge a person's acts by their conformity with externally imposed standards rather than their underlying intentions.

PS 38: "I Wouldn't Want To Get Them In Trouble. I Wouldn't Want To Get Them Sad."

Yet interviews with children at PS 38 reveal a dramatically different picture: Children there go to the opposite extreme in imagining how they would be as a teacher. They empathize with students, allow students a large margin of freedom, and are insightful enough to anticipate that they would be nervous in an authority role.

Kenny Barton (38,LS,3-3), asked what he would do if two children were fighting, says, "I wouldn't want to get them in trouble. And I wouldn't want to get them sad...Then what would I do? I would have to do <u>something</u>."

Asked what she would do if children were fighting, Rochelle Karp (38,LS,4-4) reports, "Well, I'd say, 'Don't fight, or I'll tell your mother. And your mother will be very upset.'" Rochelle's solution is also mentioned by children at PS 16. But, whereas they predict that the student's mother would resort to physical force, Rochelle predicts that the student's mother will be upset.

When children forget their pencil or notebook, Rochelle would say, "Well, I'd say, 'try not to forget it. But it's okay if you forget it, but try not to.'"

Perry Zartman (38,LS,4-2) is asked what he would do as a teacher if a student forgot his or her pencil and notebook.

S: And they really needed it?

I: Yes.

S: I would give them a piece of paper and I would tell them, 'you have to bring it tomorrow and the next day because you really need it. It's important because you have to write things on it.'

I: What would you do if you saw a student hitting another student?

S: I would stop it. I would make them stop. There's no sense hitting. You have to talk all this time. You have to see what's going on.

If someone forgot a pencil and notebook, Harriet Boston (38,LS,4-7) would loan them to the student.

I: What if they forgot the next day too?

S: That's okay.

I: And if they forgot the whole week long?

S: That would be too bad. When you forget something, it's just nature.

That students' behavior as teacher is modelled closely on their own teacher can be seen at PS 38. Among the four teachers studied there, one stood out as being more authoritarian. Pam scolded students who forgot to bring paper and pencil to school and loaned them a Magic Marker for the day--not the easiest writing instrument. Nora Davitch (38,PL,3-8), a student in this class, delivers a harsh verdict about a student who forgot paper and pencil: "I'd be very angry, like I would say, 'Bring it in, or I'm going to send her to Harold (the principal), I'm going to move her to a different class,' or something like that. Because my teacher does, because sometimes kids forget to bring their notebooks."

Carol Lapport (38,PL,4-15) also from Pam's class, says, "I would tell them, 'How many times (do) I have to tell you, (I) told you almost every day to bring in a pencil. Now, if you... keep this up, I'm going to call your mother and tell her pack some pencils or things in your lunch bag, so you won't forget them ...If you don't bring them in tomorrow, I'm going to send you down to Harold.'"

Yet, overall, children from PS 38 seem more relaxed in their expectations and less ready to resort to punishment. Their more flexible, caring approach is evident when they describe how they would be as teacher on the first day of school.

Rochelle Karp (38,LS,4-15) suggests, "Well, I'd buy a TV set for everybody. (laughs) And I'd say, 'You're allowed to play whenever you want to...You don't have to learn anything!"

Nana Lipsky (38,LS,6-4) suggests, "Like I would say, 'What would you like to do?' I'd say, 'Okay, what would you like to do?' And some people would say what they'd like to do, and then I'd get them some things. And get them all started and then I'd do some work myself or help somebody, if they had trouble or something."

Rita Narranzo (38,BB,3-13): "I would say 'Welcome back.'"

Kathy Halperovits (38,P1,7-1), "I'd introduce everybody to everybody...We'd get to know each other. And...we'd go to my house."

I: Why would we go to your house?

S: We'd just go there. And then we'd have sandwiches and then we'd come back.

However, student's in Pam's classroom (the more severe teacher at PS 38) tended, as in the hypothetical conflict situations described above, to mimick her harsh behavior. Shara Bernhardt (38,P1, 7-1): "I'm going to think about it. I know my answer. On the first day of school, I would do what Pam did." (She goes on to describe a sign-up list.)

I: Would you be friendly?

S: No...Yes, I would I think. I don't know, I never been a teacher before on the first day.

I: Okay, about Pam. Say something like Pam says it.

S: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight.

I: What would you be counting?

S: By the time I count to ten you better all be on the rug. (Students in this class assembled on a rug in the morning for a class meeting.)

Children at PS 38 are able to articulate their uncertainty about being in the unfamiliar role of teacher. Andy Spectrom (38,LS,7-20) asked what he would do as teacher, says, "Oh, I don't know. I would say, if I was late, I would be so nervous that I would say, 'class dismissed.'"

I: You'd be nervous? What would you be nervous about?

S: Because I don't know, because I never teached school before, and it's the first day. I wouldn't know what to do.

Ron Levitt (38,EW,7-1) reports, "I would be scared. I don't want to hurt anybody."

Children at PS 38 create a teacher who cares for children, allows them to play, understands that mistakes are natural, is nervous about teaching a class, and is fearful of hurting students. Students from the two schools thus create very different models of a teacher, their fantasies of a teacher may be less of an indication of how they would be as a teacher than a guide to their experience as students.

The contrasting descriptions of teaching by children at the two schools form part of their views of the wider school milieu. This is suggested by answers to questions about the principal's job. For most students at PS 16, the principal is exclusively concerned with disciplining children. June Thompson (16,Bic,3-8) says, "When people hit, they send them down to her charge." June also reports that the principal "lines the children up sometimes and she... blows a whistle, and says, 'don't run, walk.' We have to run because we want to be first (on line)."

For Susan Curran (16,Bic,3-10) the principal "gives orders." For Angel Cruz (16,Ploro,3-4) the principal "punishes the class."

Peter Tharis (16,Kle,3-6) says that the principal "always makes people quiet. When they're in the gym playing and she always makes people quiet and sometimes when they're noisy down the stairs she always comes in."

Nicky Karthen (16,Bic,7-20), after asking for assurance that his taped interview will not be shown to the teacher or principal, says that the thing he likes least about school is the principal. He barks, "'Walk to your lines,' I don't like the way she says it."

Most children at PS 16 say that the principal punishes children, tells them rules, and stops fights among children.

Students at PS 38 also see the principal as the supreme authority within the school. Andy Spectrum (16,LS,4-3) says that if he were teacher and two students were fighting, he would send them to the principal. "If you send them down to Harold, they'll know how bad that is, and they won't do that again."

Nora Davitch (38,P1,3-8) would send children who fight to the principal, "And they don't fight in Harold's office."

I: Why are they afraid to fight there?

S: Because Harold would see them and give them spankings... and they would be in very big trouble.

I: Does Harold do that? Does he ever give spankings?

S: No, I never knew that, except maybe he does.

I: I noticed that kids are more afraid of Harold than they are of...their own teacher. Why is that though?...

S: Because Harold is more important than the other teachers.

Children at PS 38 agree that the principal is the chief authority in the school. Yet they also perceive the principal as

someone to turn to for help. Many say that his job consists of running the school and helping children. David Brentwood (38,LS,3-3) says the principal "usually helps kids when they get hurt." For Arnold Binar (38,LS,3-4), the principal's job is "to take care of problems."

Whereas nearly one-fifth of PS 38 students said they would seek the principal's help if the teacher announced an unfair rule, only 7% of PS 16 students said they would ask the principal for help.

Children's descriptions of the teacher and principal suggest the two schools' contrasting social patterns. The different worlds of the schools are sensitively captured in children's comments. On the micro-level of the classroom, children from the two schools create very different worlds. Children at PS 16 describe a caricature of the constrained, hierarchical, punitive world they experience daily. It is as if, when children they are given the chance, rather than creating a better world, they compensate for their own mistreatment. Children from PS 38 live in a more flexible, stimulating world at school. When they project their own teacher, they capture the flavor of this world.

The classroom is the first setting where children have sustained contact outside the family; it is the first formal organization to which they belong. Most children gain their initial conception of formal authority from the teacher's daily example. Seven and eight year old children seem extremely open and malleable and their developing social orientations conform quite closely to their school experience.

Because children's experiences differ, they do not share a similar orientation. Further, children do not mechanically reflect their environment; they exaggerate features of this environment. When they describe how they would act as teacher, children draw on their classroom experiences but magnify the differences. Harsh as the teachers at PS 16 may be, they do not threaten a child with suspension for forgetting to bring paper and pencil to school; dedicated as teachers at PS 38 may be, they do not invite students to their home for sandwiches on the first day of class or buy them television sets! Children thus creatively rework the raw material of their early experiences, which serves to underline how crucial these experiences are.

What can be observed in embryo in the classroom is how social class differences are experienced, internalized, and reproduced. Although classrooms share certain features, they vary considerably. Children receive a very different introduction to the wider world, depending on the classroom they attend. Socialization in the classroom points toward socialization in the world lying beyond. There are many factors intervening between what children learn in a given classroom and their future life. Yet by age seven or eight, children have developed elements of an outlook on social reality, and this outlook is in considerable measure a product of their ongoing experience. As children describe how they would be as teacher, they project shadows on the wall which both reflect the contrasting worlds they already know and suggest the future worlds they will inhabit.

CLASSROOM RULES

Children in the two schools perceive, evaluate, and deal with school rules in a very different way, and the differences are strongly associated with the authority structure of the schools. Children were asked to evaluate four hypothetical rules:

1. "No asking questions in class anytime."
2. "You can't go to the bathroom without a pass."
3. "You need the teacher's permission to read a book from the classroom library."
4. "You can't ask a friend to help with a problem in your math workbook."

In contrast to most children at PS 38, many children at PS 16 appear resigned to the restrictions imposed on them. They accept the need to seek the teacher's permission to go to the bathroom or read a book from the class library. They do not question a prohibition on seeking a friend's help with a problem in their workbook. They balk only at the rule prohibiting them ever to ask the teacher's help.

TABLE 1. Evaluation of Classroom Rules*

The issue of rules is no hypothetical matter: children at both schools are forced to accept restrictions in the classroom all the time. Nonetheless, there is a difference in the areas of conduct regulated and prohibited in the two schools. Children are much freer at PS 30: freer to come and go, leave the classroom, go to the bathroom, talk with friends, and ask for help with academic problems. Children at PS 30 participate in formulating rules at class meetings.

TABLE 1. Evaluation of Classroom Rules*

	No Asking Questions	Can't Go To Bathroom Without Pass	Teacher's Permission For Book From Library	Can't Ask Freind For Helo	
PS 38	4%	8%	28%	2%	43
PS 16	20%	46%	44%	41%	32

* Percentage evaluating rule favorably.

They discuss alternative solutions to a given problem, and are encouraged by the teacher to express their opinions. Thus, they find it easier to criticize adult authority.

It might be objected that for this reason children in the two schools were not asked identical questions about rules. With the exception of the rule forbidding students ever to ask questions, which does not exist at either school, all the rules posed to students actually prevail at PS 16 but not at PS 38. Thus, students at PS 16 are being questioned about rules in their own classroom, whereas students at PS 38 are being questioned about hypothetical rules.

This is far from irrelevant. What it suggests is that the classroom situation plays a role in shaping the criteria of political legitimacy children adopt. It is plausible to speculate that students at PS 16 were more likely to evaluate rules favorably precisely because these rules were a feature of their school's social environment.

This chapter examines how children judge what is acceptable behavior in the classroom, what areas of student conduct children feel should be regulated and limited by rules, and how students might cope with the imposition of an unfair rule in their classroom. Although it seems reasonable that the orientations developed toward classroom authority are related to the development of a wider political outlook, my focus here is confined to the classroom.

Children at both schools have an ample opportunity to observe how rules are made and implemented. Teachers often devote the first day of the school year to enumerating classroom rules. All

children understood what conduct will be acceptable to the teacher and what she considers impermissible. One contrast between the schools is in children's cognitive command. Although more emphasis was placed on conformity to rules at PS 16, students at PS 16 were often unable to define rules or to say whether rules existed in their classroom. They were intimately acquainted with the concept of restriction but did not possess the vocabulary to discuss rules in abstract terms.

Thus, for example, Peter Tharis (16,Kle,2-2) says he doesn't know what rules are and that none exist in his classroom. Yet when he is asked, "How about chewing gum," he replies, "Chewing gum? Yeah, that's one....That's one you can't do." And he goes on to add another rule: you must do your homework.

Pierre Affron (16,Bic,2-20) replies, "no," when asked if he knows what a rules is. He says, "I don't know," four times when asked what it means to break a rule. Yet he replies affirmatively when asked if there are rules in his classroom, and gives an example, "Don't break, don't break anything."

Rich Kirkland (16,Bic,2-20) also has a nonverbal understanding of rules. After saying he doesn't know what a rule is, he is asked, "If somebody says, 'What is a rule,' how would you describe it?"

S: I would say my mother gives me a lot of rules.

I: When you say that, what do you mean?

S: I don't know.

I: But if she gives you a rule, what does a rule tell you?

S: To do things.

In contrast to many students at PS 38 who defined rules in abstract theoretical terms, those students at PS 16 who understood the word "rule" usually defined it by offering concrete examples from their classroom. Many PS 16 students confused "rule" with "ruler" and described a ruler and its functions.

Virtually no student from either school could provide an abstract explanation of what makes a rule good or bad. Nathan Levin (38,PL,2-2) gives cogent reasons for evaluating the four rules. Yet when the interviewer asks, "Now, judging by what you said about these four rules, what is it that makes the rule good or bad?"

S: A lot of different things for different rules.

...I: So a bad rule would be one that doesn't....

S: That doesn't make sense, that's no good. Bad rules are you're allowed to beat up kids, that's one that the bad kids in our class would love. That's their dream, that's their dream rule. But I guess it won't ever come true.

One child who provided a general guideline for evaluating rules, Jerry Rogow (38,PL,1-20) says, "The people's opinion. That the people, people who have to obey the rule, the people's opinion would make it a good rule or a bad rule."

When children were asked to evaluate four hypothetical class rules, there were sharp differences between students from the two schools. Some children at PS 16 have such a hazy conception of rules that they were not able to evaluate hypothetical rules as good or bad. Others believed that there could not be a bad rule: the

fact that a rule existed meant that it was good. Some children from PS 16 used as a standard whether the rule existed in their own classroom. By contrast, many children from PS 38 judged rules in more pragmatic instrumental terms. They appeared to evaluate a rule on the basis of whether it promoted learning.

Some students, all from PS 16, judged every rule as good and, for a given rule, sought reasons for its existence. Michael Falco (16,Kle,2-3) was asked to evaluate the rule. He regards the rule requiring students to get a pass to go to the bathroom as good, "because if you go to the bathroom by yourself, without a pass, you might forget your classroom."

Herman Vergo (16,Kro,2-20) is an extreme example of someone who seeks at all costs to justify rules. Here is the section of his interview dealing with imaginary rules:

I: How about 'no asking questions any time.' Is that a good rule or a bad rule?

S: A good rule.

I: Why?

S: Because then you make noise asking questions, teacher showing another person how to read, you disturb them.

I: How about, 'you can't go to the bathroom without a pass?' Is that a good rule or a bad rule?

S: A good rule, you're not supposed to ask the teacher.

I: How about, 'you're not supposed to ask a friend to help you when you don't know how to do a problem in your workbook?

S: That's a good rule.

I: Why?

S: Because you're supposed to ask nobody, you got to do it by yourself.

I: Okay. How about 'you cannot read a book from the classroom library without the teacher's permission.' Is that a good rule or a bad rule?

S: That's a good rule.

I: Why?

S: Because if you pick up a library book without the library teacher's permission, you get punished.

Herman seeks to justify each rule rather than making an independent evaluation. Further, he transposes the rules to his own classroom; he does not consider the rule in a more abstract imaginary situation.

Although children at PS 16 might deem a rule undesirable, few could provide reasons for their judgment. Two exceptions at PS 16 are Rich Kirkland and Cynthia Fuchs. Asked to give an example of a bad rule, Rich (16,Bic,2-4) replies, "If your mother just lets your brother do something and not you." The concept of inequality of treatment seems to be intuitively unjust to students. For example, if a student was unable to grasp the concept of a bad rule and evaluated all four positively, a surefire way to convey the concept of an unjust rule was to suggest that only children of the opposite sex should receive juice and cookies at snack-time.

Cynthia Fuchs is asked (16,Bic,2-1),

I: How did you know there could be such a thing as a bad rule?

S: Because I've heard that there are bad rules. Like a president a long time ago and I forgot his name. And he made very bad rules, and he was a very mean person too.

The interviewer asked if it was Nixon and Cynthia replied that it was not. When the interviewer suggested Hitler, she said it was.

I: What do you know about Hitler?

S: He was a very mean person and he tried to take over the whole world.

I: How do you know about Hitler?

S: 'Cause my mother shows me a map sometimes and she tells me about Hitler and she tells me the countries he took over. And bombs and stuff.

Although we cannot be sure she is referring to Hitler, since the name was first suggested by the interviewer, it is significant that Cynthia derives the concept of a bad rule from a political situation and that she learned of this from her mother, not from school.

Cynthia appears to evaluate the desirabilility of a rule by whether it contributes to a valued goal. Thus, to require a pass for going to the bathroom is a bad rule "because they would know you were going to the bathroom and so you don't need a pass." Prohibiting a student from seeking a friend's help with a problem in her workbook is a bad rule "because your friend can help you. It should be allowed because it's easier and you'll learn more things if you ask somebody." And no asking questions anytime is a "bad bad bad bad rule," because "what if you don't know it? Like, in my workbook, I didn't know it and I had ask the teacher."

Cynthia's critical stance toward rules is practically unique among children at PS 16, but quite common among children at PS 38.

Asked about the need for a pass to go to the bathroom, Daniel Brentwood (38,LS,1-9) replies, "Well, for big kids, it's kind of a good one, because they always jump around." As for the rule against asking a friend for help with a problem in your workbook, Daniel says, "Well, you can ask them to help you but not to do it."

Arnold Binar and Kenny Barton are unequivocal that no asking questions anytime is a bad rule. For Arnold (38,LS,1-12), "If we can't ask questions we can't learn stuff." For Kenny (38,LS,3-20) the rule is "bad, bad, bad, bad."

I: Why is that a bad rule?

S: Because then whenever somebody raises their hand, they would get punished.

The rule prohibiting students to ask a friend for help with a workbook problem opposes a cooperative and individualistic approach to learning. Children from the two schools receive a very different message in their classroom on this issue, and their comments reflect their classroom experience. Angel Cruz (16,Ploro,2-5) evinces a harsh creed of individualism when he defends the prohibition, "Because no one's supposed to help. No one's supposed to help other people."

I: Why not?

S: Because you got to know how to do it by yourself.

Asked about the same rule, Carol Lapport (38,PL,2-6) advocates a contrasting approach to learning, "I think that's a dumb rule.

I: Why do you think that's a dumb rule?

S: Because then...if the teacher's totally busy and she can't help all the kids at once, I think it's best to go to friends and see if they can help you. Because the teacher will have to, say if she's working with someone else, then say a student teacher's out and all the kids need help too, there would be a whole line for her."

What is the significance of these contrasts? The most obvious possibility is that children at the two schools are receiving a very different political education. This was partly a result of the

process and content of the curriculum. Children at PS 39 could choose among alternative classroom activities. They had class meetings where they discussed class projects and reported on the experiments and projects they had carried out. Teachers encouraged students to take initiative and rewarded them for doing so. Children at PS 16 were either controlled in minute detail by their teacher or left to their own devices, with sporadic and often arbitrary interventions by their teacher. In particular, there is a close parallel between children's evaluation of rules and the actual rules in their own classroom.

There are other possible reasons for the contrasts in children's discussions of rules. Rather than their comments reflecting a differing stance toward authority, they may reflect cognitive differences. Many PS 16 children could not define the word "rule." Many were not familiar with the concept of a bad rule. This would mean that PS 16 students were not expressing politically acquiescent attitudes so much as they were displaying unfamiliarity with the language of political opposition.

Differences in the family background of the children from the two schools may also weigh. Working class children at PS 16 may be taught the value of obedience whereas middle class children at PS 39 may be encouraged to take a more flexible critical attitude toward authority.[1]

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[1]Melville L. Kohn, Class and Conformity (Homewood, Illinois, 1969).

A fourth possible interpretation of the contrast between PS 16 and PS 38 children revolves around the interview situation itself. PS 16 children may have either been more intimidated and fearful of criticizing rules or they may have been trying to please the interviewer and calculated that the way to do so was by expressing acquiescent attitudes. The contrast in this event would have been an artifact of the interview.

Children at the two schools differ in other aspects of the micro-political process in classrooms. Parallel to the contrast in their attitudes toward rules, they differ in their understanding of the source of rules and how they would react to a manifestly unjust rule in their classroom.

Rulemaking: "Actually, Children are Better at Some Things Than Grownups are; Making Rules is One of Them"

Children at the two schools differ substantially regarding their conception of rules. Whereas children at PS 38 regard rules as means to achieve desired goals, children at PS 16 see rules as fixed, unalterable and an end in themselves. When asked if it is ever all right to break a rule, a higher proportion of students from PS 38 answered that it is.

Questioned about the origin of rules in their classroom, most children from both schools reply that the teacher makes up the rules. But few students from PS 16 could imagine any other source of rules, whereas many children at PS 38 volunteered that the children could help the teacher make up rules, e.g., by voting on rules. (In one class at PS 38, students reported that in fact they did participate in developing rules with their teacher at group meetings.)

Brent Flint (38,LS,1-11), speculating on an alternative to the teacher making up rules, suggests, "You could make up some yourself."

I: Does that ever happen? No? Would that be a good thing to do?

S: Yeah, but you can make up rules in your own game.

I: I see.

S: Like, if you start fighting, whoever hits first goes out. So if you both hit you both go out.

Students at PS 38 are more critical of the teacher's power to make rules. Kerry Ann Kinney (38,EW,2-1) replies, when asked if she is happy that the teacher makes up rules in her classroom, "Not very much. She should have one list of rules and not add onto it, because it gets children mixed up as to what to do about this and what to do about that." Kerry Ann thinks it would be good for the class to help the teacher make up the rules: "Actually, children are better at some things than grownups. Making rules is one of them." Jerry Rogow (38,PL,1-24) agrees that children should make the rules "because the teachers don't know what it's like to be students. They've forgotten."

Children's sense of political efficacy was tapped by a question asking what they would do if the teacher announced an undesirable rule. The rule used as an illustration was the first one that the student had designated as a bad rule among the four hypothetical rules. If the student considered all four rules as desirable, the question was asked what he or she would do if the teacher gave juice and cookies only to students of the opposite sex at snack time.

What students say they will do is not an accurate guide to what they would actually do. Yet their comments enable one to guage how the child views his or her ability to deal with the world: is the stance one of resignation, mild criticism, or an attempt to change the situation?

Students from the two schools differ substantially in the extent of their confidence that they can change the world. Children from PS 16 doubted that much could be done to change an arbitrary rule and displayed resignation in face of what they appeared to consider inevitable. Children from PS 38 described a more resilient, responsive world, in which their efforts to challenge an unjust rule would bear fruit. Nearly half the students at PS 16 said they could do nothing about an unjust rule, compared to less than one quarter of the students at PS 38. Most children at PS 38 said they would discuss the rule with their teacher, enlist their parents' or the principal's help, or change classrooms or school.

It is hard to imagine a student from PS 16 carrying on the following discussion (Jerry Rogow (38,PL,1-20)):

I: All right, you said that no asking questions is a bad rule, right? If that were really the rule, would you do anything about it?

S: I'd try to stop it.

I: How?

S: I'd send a letter to the mayor, or the president, or somebody.

I: That's the first thing you would do? . . .

S: Well, first, I'd go to Harold first, the principal. I wouldn't go to the mayor first! (laughs)

I: That's what I was wondering about. What about talking to Pam, would you talk to Pam about it?

S: Nope.

I: Why not?

S: Because she doesn't listen to people like that.

I: She doesn't?

S: She makes a rule, and she doesn't listen to anyone about it.

I: Why do you think that is?

S: I don't know.

I: Okay, so first you'd go to Harold, and what would you tell John?

S: I'd say, 'Harold, Pam's made a terrible rule.'

I: And what do you think Harold would do?

S: Well, he's the principal of the school, he'd have to do something. I don't know what he'd do. But he'd do something.

I: And after you went, if the rule still stayed, what would you do then?

S: I'd...call the mayor, board of education.

...I: Oh, oh, I wouldn't want to make a bad rule in front of you!

S: And then, if that didn't work, then I'd call the mayor. If that didn't work, I'd call the vice president. If that didn't work, I'd call the president. That would definitely work.

I: Why are you so sure that would work?

S: Because he's the president. And he makes a lot of rules.

Jerry has a complex grasp of the social world; he believes that he can persuade higher authorities to overrule lower ones, he possesses an elaborate cognitive map, and he appears confident that he can use it to gain support from higher authorities against an arbitrary subordinate authority. In his imaginary dialogue with the principal, Jerry portrays the two as being on terms of near-equality. He trusts authorities and believes they will be responsive to his demands and will redress his grievances.

However, this is not to imply that Jerry is a nascent revolutionary. His struggle against an arbitrary rule is carried on peacefully, within the system, on an individual basis. One can hardly expect revolutionary consciousness to be born from conflicts such as these. Jerry is describing a world where aggrieved citizens can expect to gain satisfaction from benevolent authorities. Yet if this is far from outright opposition, it also differs from the compliant and resigned attitudes of most children at PS 16.

Children's confidence in their ability to change an arbitrary rule may derive as much from their home background as from the school they attend. Middle class children may be more likely to perceive a world where they can be efficacious.[2] They may regard the teacher with less awe and believe they can count on their own parents as allies against the teacher if she acts unfairly. Two middle class students at PS 16 stand out there by their confidence that they could challenge their teacher. When asked what she would do about an unfair rule, Cynthia Fuchs (16,Bic,2-5) begins, "Oh boy,

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[2]Kohn, op.cit., provides survey data to suggest how middle class parents encourage greater independence among their children.

I don't know what I would do...I would tell the teacher, no, I would tell the principal and tell her that that rule--I don't like that rule at all. And I would ask people in my class if they liked it. I could ask them if they liked that rule and I would take the paper down...to the principal and...then maybe the rule would be changed."

Marcy Stalton (16,Fash,2-9) a black middle class girl at PS 16, is asked what she would do about a bad rule: "I'd break it."

I: And what do you think would happen?

S: I think I would get in trouble.

I: And then what would you do?

S: Well, then if I got in trouble, when I got home, I'd tell my mother to put me in another school, and tell her why, because I just got in trouble just for breaking a rule 'no asking questions.' So then she d say, 'That's ridiculous, you're supposed to ask questions.' So that's why I think that I would break the rule.

However, one cannot isolate family background from its social context. Most parents who send their children to PS 38 are middle class, and the school they created reflects their values. Further, school doubtless has an independent influence on children. Children spend a substantial amount of time in school. They have countless experiences there, make friends and enemies, learn the most varied lessons, witness each day a model of adult authority, and are subject to that authority. Especially at a relatively young age, children are probably influenced by the social setting of the school they attend, no matter how powerful the influence of their family may be.

Shara Bernhardt's remarks hint at the way features of her family interact with the features of school. If an unfair rule were introduced by her teacher, Shara (38,PL,2-4) would go to her principal.

I: What if he said he wasn't going to do anything about it? Would you do anything then?

S: I would tell my mother.

I: And what do you think she would do?

S: She would talk to the principal.

I: And what do you think would happen?

S: If enough parents said the same thing about it, he might change the rule.

Shara identifies four possible courses of action: she would talk to the principal directly, she would seek her mother's help, her mother would talk to the principal, and parents might coordinate efforts to persuade the principal.

Children at PS 16 hardly ever suggested that their parents could protect them against school authorities. Their parents are generally of lower status than teachers and school authorities; moreover, the rigid nature of the school organization discourages parental interventions. The interaction of family and school suggests the subtle nature of the concept of class: the reality of class is actualized in the events children experience daily.

The contrast between Shara Bernhardt and children from PS 16 is clear from several children's comments. Ana Rodres (16,Floro,4-6) describes what happens at home when she tells about school, "They hit me. My mother hits me." Ana Fernando (16,Bio,7-2) suggests that if children fight at school and the teacher reports them, their mother "will probably beat them or do something."

Wanda Pelbon (16,Floro,4-4) is asked: "What if you came home and said, 'Today was a nice day and we did arithmetic, and we drew a picture, but Mrs. Floro yelled at me.'" Wanda replies that her mother would "go to the closet and get the belt and (smack). And (she would) tell my father and it would be even harder."

The way that Wanda's imagined mistreatment influences her developing values comes out when she is asked to pretend to be the teacher and the interviewer a student. What would she do if the interviewer wanted to play during a math lesson? Wanda says that she would suspend the student from school, call her mother, and "tell your mommy to hit you." She predicts that the mother would hit the child for "being a bad girl."

The influence of school can occasionally be isolated quite clearly. Two girls with apparently similar backgrounds, who were confident, articulate, and high achievers in school, were asked what they would do if their teacher introduced the rule 'no asking questions anytime.' Nora Cline (16,Kro,2-20) answers, "I would, I'd try to figure it out for myself."

I: Okay. But let's say it was there, let's say the teacher, Ms. Kroft announced the rule one day.

S: (Laughs) I wouldn't like it.

I: No? Okay, and what would you do? Would you do anything about it?

S: There wouldn't be much I could do about it.

Nora Davitch (38,PL,2-20), in a traditional classroom at PS 38, gives a very different answer: "I'd be very angry, and...when I went home, I'd tell my mother I didn't like that school, because you couldn't even ask any questions...My mother would change me to a different school."

At PS 38, the combination of greater comraderie with the teacher, greater support at home, easier rapport with the principal, and more student power meant that students could visualize greater possibilities for changing an arbitrary rule. Brent Flint (38,LS, 1-3) suggests that he would go to his principal, who would "tell Lilly that she can't do that." Lilla Armenton (38,PL,1-13) says that she would "just tell my teacher I don't like that rule, can you change it?" And if the teacher didn't change it, "I would tell Harold, maybe, 'Why can't I ask questions in my classroom?' And he might say, 'Who made that rule?' And I would say, 'My teacher. We're not allowed to ask questions.' And he would, for example, tell the teacher not to." Kathy Halperovits (38,PL,2-19) would "ask my mother to talk to the teacher." Kathy also says that she would ask the class to vote to "see if anybody wanted that rule." Michael Rachmind (38,LS,2-20), "I'd tell my mother. And she'd tell Lilly not to make up that rule."

While several children at PS 16 mentioned these alternatives, many said that they could do nothing. Raoul Dunbar (16,Ploro,2-4) says he can't change a rule because "that's not nice." If her teacher made a rule prohibiting questions, Susan Curran (16,Bic,3-20) says she would "have to be silent as a mouse, or I would have to go out of school."

This analysis of children's attitude toward rules provides additional elements in understanding the political impact of schools. Children at PS 16 live in a rigid school environment and their comments suggest that they have little confidence in their ability to change it. Children at PS 38 live in a resilent environment at school and display a robust belief that they can rectify inequities

in their environment. Not that children at PS 16 are in actuality the docile robots implied by their words. They mount constant opposition in class to teacher demands by their apathy, restlessness, resentment, evasion of teacher directives, and resistance to schoolwork. Yet their "passive resistance"--similar to that often mounted by subordinates in such diverse situations as bureaucracies, factories, and armies--does not pose a fundamental challenge and can even be used against them to demonstrate their failure to display "appropriate" behavior in school.

Meanwhile, children at PS 38 are learning to exercise initiative, develop confidence, and work within established channels to effect change. The system works for them, providing them with more support to excel in high school and college and to reach positions of authority in the adult world of work.

Blaming the Victim

Most American children are insulated from the world of work, and have only the haziest idea of how goods are produced and wealth distributed. Soviet children described by Bronfenbrenner spend much of their time in school on vocational activities and have close contacts with factories and offices. A class of children may be "adopted" by a factory unit or bureau and there are frequent visits and joint activities.[1] In the United States there is little contact between the worlds of school and work.

Yet children do have impressions about the economy. They receive a powerful if deformed image from television, in which most people are middle class or upper middle class and in which the poor are usually either sweet and docile, or criminals.

Judging from my interviews, children's views of the social world seem informed by a primitive capitalism. In their view, everyone is born with equal possibilities and resources; inequalities in wealth derive exclusively from differences of effort and merit. For children from both PS 16 and PS 38, life is a kind of gigantic game of monopoly, with merit substituted for luck. The wealthy obtain their positions by hard work and abstinence. The poor deserve their poverty since it is self-inflicted: they are busy spending money rather than working hard and saving. While schools do not teach this lesson explicitly, their underlying principles are identical to this individualist, meritocratic theory of educational achievement which presumably accounts for who succeeds and fails in school.

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[1]Uric Brenfenbrenner, Two Worlds of Childhood (N.Y., 1970).

Michael Falco (16,Klo,5-4) explains that people become poor because "they have lots of money and run out."

I: Do you always begin by having a lot of money?

S: You begin with a lot.

I: You begin with a lot? Are there any people who begin with no money?

S: No.

I: So everybody begins with a lot?

S: Yeah.

Andy Spectrom (38,LS,5-20) speculates that differences of wealth arise "because maybe first people have the same amount of money but then it matters how good people work, how many things peoply buy, and things like that."

For Louis Squalli (16,Fash,5-8), people become wealthy because "they save up their money and pay the rent. The make more...money to go to work."

I: Okay, how do people get to be poor?

S: Because they don't go to work.

I: Why not?

S: Because they don't feel like it. They're lazy.

For James Roman (16,Ploro,5-6), wealth and poverty are explained by "the fact that some people like to work and some other people don't like to work."

Mary McCarthy (38,PL,4-8) explains how people become poor: "Well, if they're greedy or something, they want to buy everything. They start doing that and so then they spend all their money and become poor."

Herman Vargo (16,Kro,5-5) observes that "poor people spend their money and rich saves it."

Marcy Stalton (16,Fash,5-13) suggests that "the people who work day and night make a lot more money than anybody."

I: What about poor people?

S: They don't hardly make any money. They only make about 35 cents a day or something.

I: Why do you think some people make a lot of money and some people make very little money?

S: Some people don't work all the time so I guess they don't make a lot of money. If you're sick a lot and you don't want to go to work, then you don't get any money.

Marcy explains that people lose their jobs "because they don't work hard enough."

In the typical scenario, equality of wealth exists at the outset along with equality of opportunity. People get their just deserts: what they have depends on individual effort, and rewards are in strict proportion to effort and virtue. Most children leave little room for ambiguity. Only a few students, nearly all from PS 38, referred to unemployment or low wages in accounting for poverty, Kerry Ann Kinney (38,EW,5-3) explains that "some people have... bank deposits, private stocks, they bank a lot of money...And some people get low-down jobs, just pumping gas for a dollar a day, I guess."

According to Daniel Bentwood (38,LS,3-12) people become poor by living in a poor country. "And a lot of the countries are very poor; all they get is potatoes and rice. Anything. All they need is food."

Heidi Rogow (38,LS,5-7) suggests a kind of functionalist theory to account for wealth and poverty: "Some jobs are better than other

jobs and...they work more...Some people go to work, their wives, like some people get rewards...And other people don't."

Kathy Halperovits (38,PL,5-10) explains that some people are poor "because they don't have jobs."

I: Why do you think they don't have jobs?

S: Because they can't get jobs.

... I: Why can't they?

S: Because nobody will let them.

I: Why?

S: Because they don't have any jobs around town.

At PS 16, poverty is not a distant abstract issue. Most children at the school qualify for federally subsidized lunch because of their family's low income. Yet at the same time that their remarks occasionally convey their direct experience with poverty, they apparently accept the cruel logic of blaming the victim. The intertwining of the two themes is reflected in Angel Cruz' comments. Angel (16,Ploro,5-7) suggests that being rich means that people have "a lot of money."

I: Okay. What if somebody is called poor. What does that mean?

S: He's bad.

... I: If somebody was poor and they wanted to become rich, how would they do that?

S: Buy food.

I: Buy food?

S: Buy money.

Asked what he would do if he had a lot of money, Angel answers, "Buy something."

I: What would you buy?

S: Food.

I: What would you buy food for?

S: My mother.

According to street-wise Toya Berston (16,Fash,5-7), people get rich because "they work hard for the money and some be pimps... And some are hustlers. And I don't know nothing else about rich and poor."

Political Consequences

Some children draw conservative policy consequences from their primitive capitalist theory of the origins of wealth. Arnold Rittinger (38,PL,5-18) is asked: "Do you think it's fair that some people have a lot of more money than others?" He answers, "Well, what's wrong with it? They do the work, they get the money."

Arnold Binar (38,LS,3-17) says that being poor means "you may not survive...Poor people use a lot of money, they shouldn't have done that...The rich people do the right thing...The poor people do the wrong thing, and the rich people do the right thing."

Rochelle Karp (38,LS,4-11) does not think it would be desirable for everyone to be rich, for then "they don't have to go to a job, and...it would be no good, because then no one would buy anything, new clothes, food."

Are children as cruel and indifferent as their harsh indictment of the poor would seem to indicate? One must consider the information which shapes children's thinking. Children are rarely informed about why poverty exists and how people actually become poor. And consider the conservative role of television, as when Marianne Evens (38,PL,1-19) explains: "Maybe the poor people are happy with what they have. Because once I saw a TV program, this man was poor and he thought it was fun being poor."

Furthermore, while most children subscribe to the theory of primitive capitalism sketched above, many simultaneously hold what might be called primitive communist beliefs. A majority of children chose the equalitarian alternative when asked whether equality or inequality of wealth is preferable.

Brent Flint (38,LS,4-11) suggests: "I think it should be that everybody has about the same (amount of money). Because the poor people, they don't have any place to live. But the rich have these big mansions."

I: Well, how come that isn't changed?

S: Because the rich people are too greedy.

I: How do they get to be so greedy?

S: From being rich.

I: Okay. How about the poor people?

S: Are they greedy? No, they're nice...Because the way they probably got to be poor, they gave other people money. And it finally ended up that they are poor.

Nicky Kartner (16,Bic,5-10) believes inequalities of wealth are unfair "because the people who have a lot can buy a big house and the people with little money, sometimes they don't buy any house."

Sandy Harberg (38,EW,5-4) considers inequality unfair "because the poor people don't get enough money and they die quicker."

Four children expounded explicitly radical positions. Asked what kinds of laws there are for the whole country, Karol Roberts (38,LS,2-20) declares, "Some of them are really bad laws."

I: What are the bad rules or bad laws?

S: They are good for...rich people.

I: Why is that?

S: They're not good for good people, but they're good for bad people.

I: I see, for rich people. How come that is? Why is it like that?

S: Because the president is more bad than good.

I: Why is that?

S: Because he likes rich people.

I: Why is that?

S: He gives to rich people and takes from poor people.

I: I see. How do you know about that?

S: Daddy told me.

Nora Davitch (38,PL,6-15) says that her mother told her everyone in Cuba has the same amount of money. "Do you think that's a good thing there, is it better that way?" Nora replies, "I guess so, except some people don't like it there and they moved here."

Perry Zartman (38,LS,5-7) says that politicians won't end pollution because "they want everybody to die and stuff. I don't know, it's so horrible. They're just dumb people...I hate them... They don't know anything." As for policemen, "Well, they're mostly not good either...They just want...people to be scared of them. They want to be the boss of something, the whole world...It's a police state, New York is a real police state."

I: No kidding? Well, what makes it a police state?

S: Because there's millions and millions and millions and millions and trillions of policemen.

I: I see, it's because there's so many policemen, and they're doing those things. I see.

S: Doing bad things and stuff.

For Jose Cordero (16,Ploro,3-11) people are poor "because maybe if you work hard the boss doesn't pay you enough."

Although it is hazardous to draw firm conclusions about the overall ideological location of the children interviewed, three of the four children above (the only ones whose comments might be construed as radical) were from PS 38.

Seven year old children do not have a coherent set of political beliefs; contradictory elements comfortably co-exist in their thinking. Despite some elements of an equalitarian stance, most display acquiescent positions. Far from questioning the way the world is constituted, they seek reasons to justify it. In a manner reminiscent of how they reflect about their classroom experiences, children may perceive distressing elements but, rather than questioning them, they accept injustice.

"A Certain Place Called Watergate"

Most political events are remote from children's experience, and they lack political information or a theoretical perspective from which to view politics. However, toward the end of the school year 1974-75, the New York fiscal crisis erupted. When cutbacks in school services were announced, meetings were held in some New York schools, including PS 38, to protest. Lilla Armenton (38,P1,5-5) reports that a meeting was called "because they wanted to take some of the teachers out of here and cut the kindergarten. Just to save money." Asked if the mayor acted correctly, she replied, "it's right because he should save money. And he's wrong because...kids that want to go to kindergarten can't go."

Shara Bernhardt (38,PL,3-4) was asked the purpose of the protest meeting; her reply: "to save kindergarten."

I: What's happening to it?

S: Mayor Beame wants it.

I: Why?

S: He has some crazy ideas.

I: Why do you think so?

S: I think he's crazy, well, to save money. That's the only reason I know.

In a later interview (5-6) Shara says that the mayor "takes away kindergarten and made bigger classes." Yet, when she is asked whether the mayor can do anything wrong, she says that she doesn't know.

Children find it hard to condemn public officials. They were asked what a fireman, policeman, president, and mayor do; and whether these officials ever make a mistake. Most children replied that authorities do make mistakes. But as Daniel Brentwood (38,LS,3-10) puts it, "Yes, everyone makes a mistake. I heard that on Sesame. Everyone mistakes a lot." No distinction is made between mistakes by public officials and others.

American children in 1975 got an unusual political education. The residue of Watergate could be observed at the time of the interviews. Although recollections of Watergate were far more frequent at PS 38 than at PS 16. Most children at PS 38 had a fairly clear idea of what had occurred.

When asked if the president could do anything wrong, John Herron (38,PL,3-19) replied, "Yeah, President Nixon did a lot of things wrong."

I: Okay, can you tell me about that at all?

S: Well, stealing money, he did something in a certain place called Watergate, but I don't remember...what he did.

Asked about Nixon Mel Bassett says, "He's the worst, that's all I know."

I: What did he do?

S: He got those wars going and he really messed up everything.

I: Have you ever heard of Watergate?

S: Who hasn't?

I: What can you tell me about Watergate?

S: It was about some tapings. They wanted to impeach him but he resigned before they could impeach him. He made history. He was the first president to resign.

Rita Narranzo (38,BB,3-8) also brought up the war in connection with Nixon. (Not one student did so at PS 16.) "He shot a lot of people in the war. That's why they didn't want him any more for president."

Asked if the president can do anything wrong, Kerry Ann Kinney (38,EW,5-2) replies:

S: Well, he can do like Richard Nixon did, make promises and never really do them.

I: Who's Richard Nixon? Tell me about him.

S: He was a guy who was president actually.

I: Did you ever hear of Watergate?

S: Yes.

I: What is it?

S: Some people had stolen money from the politicians' bank and they wanted to find out who it is and they thought it was Richard Nixon. Or somebody like that, they kept him on trial and found out.

At PS 16, few children understood what happened to Nixon. They were uncredulous when the interviewer explained the Watergate affair. Those children who did know usually assimilated it to more familiar events. For Ana Fernando (16,Ploro,5-5), Nixon "got suspended."

I: What does that mean, he got suspended?

S: He got put out, he's not president any more. (Ana doesn't know why Nixon was suspended.)

For Richie Gales (16,Bic,5-5), "Nixon resigned."

I: Why did he resign?

S: They wanted him to.

I: Why did they want him to?

S: Because he was a bad president.

I: What made him a bad president?

S: I don't know.

Nara Cline (16,Kro,5-3) offered the most complete description at PS 16 of what occurred:

S: President Nixon kept on telling lies...President Nixon did something wrong.

I: ...What kind of lies were they that he told?

S: ...I think I do know one lie. He said he didn't, something about tapes. Because I was going on vacation and we stopped in this motel, my father had the TV on so loud that I couldn't go to sleep.

I: I see. And you heard it.

S: I heard it because he was listening to it. I think other people were in the hotel too, because when the thing was turned off, I heard somebody else turn it on. Everybody was listening to it.

I: ...Do you think it's a good thing that Nixon is gone?

S: I knew you were going to say that. It is, according to what my father says.

Louis Squalli (16,Fash,5-3) also relies on television for information about the president: "He was a crook. They said it on TV."

Children who had some understanding of Watergate were asked if it was better that Nixon was no longer president. Nara Cline, just quoted, was virtually the only child at PS 16 to give a coherent reply. At PS 38, many children expressed an opinion, usually supporting Nixon's ouster. For Tom Lifton (38,LS,4-6), "Ford may not be too good, but at least he's honest."

Mary McCarty (38,PL,4-6) shows insight and empathy in explaining why she thinks Nixon's departure is desirable: "I guess so, because lots of bad things that he'd been doing, I guess it made other people do some things. They said, 'if the president can do that, I can.' So they just went on and did it so they thought they didn't want him to be president any more."

Seven year old children engage in political analysis that blends fact and fiction, with results that may not be far from the mark. Shara Bernhardt (38,PL,5-2) describes what is noteworthy about President Ford: "He makes money for himself."

I: How does he do that?

S: He counterfeits.

I: Well, he's not supposed to. Do you think he does?

S: Yes.

I: Why do you think he does?

S: No, the last president did.

I: The last president...Well, he didn't counter...Who was the last president?

S: I forgot his name.

I: Nix...

S: Nixon.

I: What did he do? Can you tell me about it?

S: He was very mean. And my parents didn't vote for him. And my grandma and grandpa did.

I: What else can you tell me about him?

S: He counterfeited...He put high prices on everything.

Questions about the formal world of politics usually produced the least vivid and interesting responses from children. Politics seems remote from young children and their political orientations seem to develop out of immediate experience, from abstract formulas, or are directly copied from their parents. The extent of the influence of children's early experiences and embryonic political orientation on later beliefs and actions remains an open question.

Familiarity with the Social World

The major difference between children at PS 33 and PS 16 regarding the wider political and social world seems to lie in the realm of information, not values. Children at PS 33 are more knowledgeable about formal political institutions. This is not surprising, since the issues discussed are more familiar to the middle class.

Thus, higher proportions of children at PS 38 correctly named the incumbent mayor and president, knew about Watergate, could define a law and tell its origins, or knew what a college or university was.

Sandy Harberg (38,EW,3-3) says, when asked if she knows what a college is, "Yes, everybody does in our school...We talk about it sometimes." This is certainly not the case at PS 16.

Kathy Halperovits (38,P1,3-10) says she would like to be a psychologist, scientist, doctor, or teacher when she grows up, and accurately describes each profession. Asked whether she plans to attend college, she replies, "I hope so...Because I can't be a doctor, a teacher, or anything else I want to do if I don't go to college."

Arnold Binar (38,LS,3-7), whose father is a psychiatrist, says that he plans to attend college because "Everybody has to."

By contrast, when Louis Squalli (16,Fash,3-5) is asked if he will attend college, he replies, "I hope I make it."

I: I hope so too. What does it take to make it to college?

S: Be smart.

Although PS 16 is within walking distance of three large universities, a considerable number of students at PS 16 were not familiar with the word college or university. For children from PS 38, college is a familiar part of their social environment.

Children's views about the social and political world have elements in common with their views about the classroom. In both cases, most children, although cognizant of distressing features, use harsh standards to blame the weak and display tolerance toward the powerful, who they regard as meriting their privileges and not being

responsible for their errors. Even when children incorporate equalitarian elements in their developing political theory, they rarely can conceive of how to make the world (or the classroom) more just. At least for these students, childhood is not a period in which a manifestly critical orientation develops. The few children who did question more were from the more permissive environment of PS 38. Yet this is hardly the stuff from which a widespread opposition would develop, at least in the absence of catalyzing issues and organizations later in life. In most children at both schools, childhood seems to be a period in which acquiescent beliefs predominate.[2]

[2]These findings are similar to those reported in most political socialization research.

What Is School Teaching?

I observed over and over again how teachers attempt to convince children of their impotence and to force them to work at tedious tasks devoid of interest and meaning. I will describe the process by isolating a number of specific elements, illustrated from my interviews and observations.

1. The teacher as sole authority. Consciously or not, most teachers attempt to monopolize power and foster dependence by the children. An important instance of authoritarian practice is when children must request the teacher's permission to go to the bathroom. In Ms. Ploro's class, children lined up at a specified time to visit the bathroom. In the open corridor classrooms, a system of passes limited the number who could go at one time.

The ultimate in teacher domination was exemplified by Ms. Klein, who appeared to view the need to relieve oneself as an indication of moral turpitude. One day, the paraprofessional gave a boy permission to go to the bathroom. As he was leaving the classroom, Ms. Klein called out, "No, you can't leave." The paraprofessional replied, "I gave him permission, it's an emergency." Ms. Klein said, "It's always an emergency. If I let him go, everyone will want to. Not before 10 o'clock." And with that the boy was forced to return to his seat.

In The Informed Heart, Bruno Bettelheim suggests that "forcing concentration camp prisoners to adopt childlike behavior" reduced their autonomy.[1] Bettelheim's point might be reversed: placing children in a situation where they are unable to exercise autonomy helps perpetuate childhood dependency. Bettelheim reports that the

following measures were used to produce regression to infantile behavior among concentration camp prisoners. These were all more likely to be employed at PS 16 than PS 38.

a. Physical punishment, which created dependency and feelings of helplessness;

b. The threat of punishment. Indeed, notes Bettelheim, "... Childlike feelings of helplessness were created much more effectively by the constant threat of beatings than by actual torture."[2]

c. Regulating prisoners' lives, including minute details of toilet habits. Elimination was "strictly regulated in the camp, with elimination usually being prohibited during the day. But even when exceptions were made a prisoner who needed to eliminate had to get permission from a guard and then report to him when he finished..."[3]

At PS 16, a visit to the bathroom was a highlight of the school day; the bathroom was among the children's favorite areas in the whole school. By contrast, in PS 38, where classroom activity was more enjoyable, and children did not need to seek permission to go to the bathroom, a trip there was less alluring.

d. The apparent meaninglessness of assigned work. "Another influence adding to regression into childhood behavior was the work prisoners were given to do."[4] Bettelheim suggests that nonsensical tasks were the worst, for example, being forced to haul rocks from one place and then back again.

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[1]Bruno Bettelheim, The Informed Heart, pp.130-31.

[2]Ibid., p. 131.

[3]Ibid., p.132.

[4]Ibid., p.134.

The greatest loss of autonomy occurred among those prisoners who came to believe "that their environment was one over which they could exercise no influence whatsoever."[5] Children at PS 16, especially in the traditional classrooms, were placed in a comparable situation. Seven-year old children can be encouraged to assume extensive responsibility, as the example of PS 38 suggests. To oversimplify, whereas PS 38 autonomy and initiative were encouraged, at PS 16 children were rewarded for passive, compliant behavior.

Ms. Klein was an extreme example of an authoritarian, punitive teacher. Testimony to her ruthlessness occurred one day when a professor of early childhood education from Teachers College accompanied me to PS 16. After several minutes of a projected hour's visit to Ms. Klein's class, he abruptly left the classroom. When I asked him why, he replied, "I couldn't take it. Is this what comes out of our training at Teacher's College?"

While the anecdotes which follow would not have taken place in other classrooms, they did occur in Ms. Klein's classroom -- and she was regarded by the principal and other teachers as competent, if somewhat harsh. Ms. Klein kept up a running stream of insults, yelling, threats and punishment. She frequently assaulted children, grabbing them and pushing them into their seats. She interpreted any independence as a challenge to her authority.

Children in Ms. Klein's class were helpless against her onslaughts. For example, each morning, Ms. Klein would call on a child to mark the date on a calendar with a magic marker. One day, she called on a boy but forgot to give him a pen. He walked up to the calendar and stood there, silent, until Ms. Klein realized her oversight.

5 Ibid., p.151.

One day, when Ms. Klein was conducting a reading group, she noticed a boy's book open to the wrong page. She shook him back and forth, and began turning the pages of the book--only to discover that several pages were missing, whereupon she silently gave him another book. The boy had apparently been too frightened to inform Ms. Klein of the missing page; nor, she did not apologize for her assault.

Once during a reading group, Ms. Klein stalked across the room, shoved a boy who was reading quietly, and yelled, six inches from his face, "You stop doing that. I'm not going to take that stuff from you." The distinction between instructions, demands, evaluations, and punishments did not exist: they were all one.

A sign pinned on the wall of Ms. Klein's classroom seemed to reflect her sentiments: "It's so silly to argue. Bragging will soon be found out. A good little boy never talks back."

No other teacher approached Ms. Klein in severity, arbitrary and abusive behavior, and sheer inhumanity. Yet in her extreme behavior are revealed elements that recur in other classrooms.

2. Mystification. Mystification is the process by which the contingent, artifactual nature of reality is masked and presented as natural and inevitable. Mystification produces a sense of impotence by concealing that people have the capacity to shape their social world. Instead of participating in shaping the world, one adapts to external circumstances not of one's own choosing.

In the classrooms I visited, children were compelled to adapt to the bureaucratic requirements of school. Education was a top-down activity; children were the objects, not the subjects, of education. In Paulo Freire's terms, teachers at PS 16 adhered to a bank-deposit

process of education, in which children were viewed as passive recipients to be filled with education, rather than active subjects who expanded through the process of seeking knowledge.[6]

As described in previous chapters, children do challenge the received wisdom and prevailing constraints. But such challenges only contribute to the tone of chaos and bitterness found in many classrooms, and possibly induce a sense of futility in children.

On the rare occassions when a more explicit challenge is posed to the process of mystification, its arbitrary character can be discerned. An excellent example occurred one day when Ms. Klein was leading a group in the task of reading flash cards. The words on the cards were standard English. The children took turns reading a word from a card. If the child read the word correctly, she or he received the card to keep until the end of the lesson. If not, another child could volunteer to read the word (and kept the card if the word was read correctly). There was great excitement in the lesson, because of the competition it encouraged among children.

During the lesson on this occasion, an Hispanic boy asked the teacher: "Ms. Klein, why aren't there any Spanish words?" Ms. Klein swiftly replied, "You get what comes up."

What she did not point out was that Spanish words would never come up in this deck of flash cards: there were no Spanish words in the deck. Nor did she mention that she wrote the words on the cards. Thus, she mystified her decision not to include Spanish words in the reading lesson and presented as a fact of nature what was a result of human choice.

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[6] Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

3. The stifling of imagination. In The Uses of Enchantment, Bruno Bettelheim suggests, "In order not to be at the mercy of the vagaries of life, one must develop one's inner resources, so that one's emotions, imagination, and intellect mutually support and enrich one another." Bettelheim castigates most children's literature for failing "to stimulate and nurture those resources he (the child) needs most in order to cope with his difficult inner problems... The idea that learning to read may enable one later to enrich one's life is experienced as an empty promise when the stories the child listens to, or is reading at the moment, are vacuous."[7]

Schooling stifles children's imaginations in ways that go far beyond the pallid literature imposed on them. The ritual of school often reduces life to the dull routine of "what comes up." Several anecdotes can illustrate the process. In one classroom, children began the day with a ritual greeting. The teacher would write the day of the week on the blackboard, along with the date and a sentence summary of the weather. The following scenario would then occur:

Teacher: Good morning, class.

Children: (in unison) Good morning, Ms. Floro.

Teacher: What day is today?

Children: Today is Thursday, November 12.

Teacher: How are you?

Children: We are fine. How are you?

Teacher: I am fine. How is the weather?

Children: (reading from the blackboard) Today is warm and sunny.

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[7] Bruno Bettelheim, The Uses of Enchantment, p.4.

In this classroom, there was no place for unhappiness. Moreover, the morning ritual required children to rely on the teacher's dictum for information about the weather, although large windows in the classroom afforded ample opportunity for direct observation.

Another example for the narrowing of imagination was a blackboard exercise in Ms. Klein's class. The teacher read children a question from the board and children replied aloud in unison.

An instance of how imagination was stifled occurred one day when a girl in Ms. Kraft's class sought my help with a problem in her math workbook. The problem did not check correctly and Nara wanted to know what she was doing wrong. When I examined her work,

I discovered a typographical error in the printed workbook. Nara was startled--and thrilled: for the first time in her life, she realized that one should not believe everything one saw in print. The teacher was incredulous when Nara told her about the error. After inspecting the book, she grudgingly conceded that the workbook was in error. However, she appeared defensive and annoyed. She corrected the mistake but did not use the opportunity to share with the class the utility of skepticism toward the printed page.

4. Work as the core of reality. The work ethic has been challenged in some spheres, but it is grimly alive in the traditional classrooms I studied. Children are expected to be working most of the time--at tasks and at a pace determined by the teacher. Work appears to be necessary for its own sake, to avoid punishment, and as a form of punishment.

A characteristic command is to "get something to do." Thus, on the first day of class, Ms. Klein took all joy out of work and drawing by saying, "There are crayons and paper in the library. You can't use them unless I tell you. You use them after you've finished your work--when a teacher checks your work and you're not going to be called for reading. I don't want you doing nothing. But only five crayons at a time."

Ms. Bic, in an open corridor classroom, spied two boys sitting quietly together. "What's the matter with you two boys. You look like old men. You're not doing anything. Can't you find something to do?"

Ms. Klein neatly equates work and outward activity when she says, "David, move your pencil and I'll see that you're working."

One day the principal came to observe a special reading lesson that Ms. Bic had prepared for the group of advanced readers. It was obvious that she had worked hard to prepare the lesson and the principal's presence signified an occasion of particular importance. Naturally, many other children crowded around the table to listen. But Ms. Bic shooed them away. "Get something to do," she barked--although it was obvious that what the children most wanted to do was to assist at her lesson.

What constitutes work? The usual definition of work at PS 16 is the 3 R's. Rather than having to go back to basics, the traditional classrooms I studied never departed from them. Most of the children's school day was ostensibly devoted to the acquisition of basic cognitive skills. It may not be surprising that in these grim conditions children have difficulty acquiring cognitive skills. School becomes the battleground for a never-ending tug-of-war between teachers and students. John Kerrigan, former member of the Boston School Committee (and an ally of Louise Day Hicks), observed in an attempt to evade responsibility for the resulting situation, "We have no inferior education in our schools. What we have been getting is an inferior type of student."[8]

5. The pace of work. Teachers in the traditional classroom determine the pace of work to the minute. Students are warned what will ensue if they do not finish an assignment on time. Thus, on the first day of class, Ms. Klein announces, "When you've finished (an assignment) I'm going to give you a star on your notebook and a cookie. But if you don't finish your work, you'll have to finish

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[8]Dollars and Sense, "Roots of the Anti-Busing Movement," September 1976, no. 19, p. 14.

it during free play--and I mean that. So, you must finish your work first before free play. And don't just do it and think you can get your star and a cookie. You have to do it well."

A teacher's attempt to control the pace of work may extend to setting a maximum as well as minimum quota. The following exchange occurred in Ms. Klein's class:

T: What are you doing?

S: I finished this page so I started the next.

T: Can't you control yourself?

S: Yes.

T: Well, why did you go ahead?

S: I don't know.

T: From now on, you better pay attention to the group's work and not do anything else until I tell you.

6. Work and comportment. Learning and comportment are often falsely equated by teachers. Ms. Klein provides a prime example when she points out, "I don't understand why some of the children say they don't understand this lesson. We've been over it several times. Well, let's do it again. And you better pay attention. Because I don't have to take the test, you do." When a boy asked a question about the lesson, he was told, "If you missed anything, that's because you weren't there." And she refused to explain the lesson.

Ms. Klein once complained in class, "It's always the same people that don't know the answers, the ones that never listen to me that don't know everything (sic)." Academic performance is thus confused with "proper" comportment. Ms. Klein is only acting con-

sistently when she says, "Michael, in the whole time that's all you've done? You can't have any cookie, I'm sorry. Take some milk but that's all."

Ms. Klein refused to give another child a cookie, saying, "Why, you don't work nearly fast enough." To a third child, "You can do those sentences. You just don't want to, no cookie." My research assistant, who reported this anecdote, suggests, "The adults are uniformly rude to the children and use the rules of courteous intercourse as a club, reminding the children of them not to instruct them in social interaction, but as a weapon to intimidate."

Even when children are praised--which is rare--it is frequently linked to criticism of other children. When one girl was the only student to volunteer the correct answer to a question, Ms. Klein said, "Is Melinda the only one who was here last week?" An example of generous behavior was challenged by Ms. Klein when, during a show and tell period, a boy stood up and displayed a birthday card and a dollar bill that he had received from a girl in the class. Instead of praising the girl, Ms. Klein was immediately suspicious. She asked where the girl had gotten the money, and why she had given such a lavish gift. After receiving satisfactory answers, she concluded sourly, "You must be a very rich girl," and went on to something else.

7. Work as punishment. Work is both what one "ought" to be doing and a punishment for not doing what one ought to be doing. Ame Rodres (16,FL,7-1) suggests that her teacher yells "because everytody makes noise, like when we're reading. And that's why he gives us so much work." She later suggests that when her teacher

gets mad, he "punishes one of the boys and puts on the board extra homework." Schoolwork and homework are often used as punishment for either deficient work or improper behavior. This hardly seems an effective way to instill love of academic subjects.

Ms. Klein equates work with proper comportment and punishment when she yells at a boy who left his seat, "If you keep this up, you won't get a new book. You'll stay all year on this one and YOU WON'T LIKE IT." In a similar vein, she barks at a girl. "You want to stay on that book? Or do you want to go back to Uptown, Downtown? You better listen, do you understand me young lady?"

8. "Achievement is individual." Although inaccurate, this obiter dictum, from a leading textbook on curriculum development remains the last word on the subject in the traditional classrooms I studied.[9] Teachers apparently believe that learning can occur only when children work silently and alone. Ms. Ploro expresses it pithily, when she calls out to one child: "You can't do two things at the same time; when you are working, you can't be talking." (Ms. Ploro does not explain why.)

There is a continual sustained attempt to prevent children from helping each other with their work. Cooperation among students was considered cheating, as when, in Ms. Ploro's class, a paraprofessional barks out, "What are you doing? Put your pencil down. Norma, you're not going to help Eddie by telling him the words."

9. Classroom order. Teachers in traditional classrooms apparently adhere to a theory of classroom order which stipulates that any sound or movement not explicitly sanctioned by the teacher is disruptive.

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[9]Sayles and Alexander, p. 50.

Ms. Klein calls out, "I don't want to hear another sound from this room. It's going to be absolutely quiet. I better see work Rufus. I mean business."

This conception of classroom order is absurd. It is necessary to observe a typical classroom to understand why: thirty children are forced to congregate in a small space, to work side by side on tiresome and unrewarding tasks-- yet asked not to avail themselves of the opportunity for help and recreation by communicating with their peers. It is inevitable, as George Dennison points out, "that the children talk among themselves...that they fight over some object, a pencil, a book, a candy bar. In crowded classrooms, things of this sort, countered by efforts (by the teacher) to stifle them, are endlessly disturbing." Dennison observes that the result is a "naked conflict of wills" between students and teacher.[10]

10. What is worth learning? In PS 16, learning is presented as fragmented into the specialized subjects of the standard official curriculum. Learning only occurs in school-- and thereby much of the child's rich experience outside school is devalued. This is especially true for the lower class child. Many of the experiences gained by the middle class child outside school, e.g., going to the museum, or discussions with parents, contribute to excelling at academic subjects. Schooling conveys the message that, in order to learn, children must remain within the same place, many hours a day, day after day, week after week, year after year. Learning becomes office work. A related theme is that there is an expert with

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[10]George Dennison, The Lives of Children, pp.22, 17.

unquestioned authority who conducts the learning process. The teacher becomes an expert with a monopoly of wisdom, acting as a mediator between the hierarchy and the client or consumer of knowledge. The teacher's judgment is final in ranking the "progress" of children.

What is ignored, however, is far more important than what is taught. Take such critical issues as conflict, sex, and injustice. Conflicts in school are treated as wholly undesirable. In this view conflicts do not or should not exist. Sexual matters are also virtually never mentioned by teachers. More generally, children are in effect asked to check their emotional lives at the classroom door. This is made clear by a teacher interviewed by Studs Terkel, in Working.

> "Injustice is wholly ignored by school, either because there is none or the subject is too disturbing for young children. The effect is to legitimate what exists as the only possible alternative."

Teachers who would like to take a more active interest in their students and analyze these troublesome issues are hindered by lack of time: the pressure of academic work makes attention to other issues appear a diversion from "serious" matters.

11. "I'm saying this for your good not mine," Ms. Klein exclaimed the first day of class, to justify yelling at a child. "When I see something happening I don't like, I'm going to raise my voice. When I'm talking, I don't want to see your back and I don't want to see you talking." Children were frequently reminded

that the purpose of school was to help them. But when schoolwork is boring and discipline harsh, it must be too difficult to fathom the reasons.

12. Facade versus reality. There is a continual struggle to define and interpret what is occurring in school, as well as to determine what shall actually occur. A major aim of this ideological battle is to obscure the extent of struggle, unhappiness, and strife in school. What follows is an extreme example taken from my notes of a Halloween party held in PS 16.

For several weeks, children in the open corridor classrooms at PS 16 had been preparing for a Halloween party. With meticulous care they had been making costumes of witches and princes, monsters and batman. They prepared elaborate invitations, with drawings and pictures, colored paper, and collages. They baked days before: carrot cake and muffins, cookies and cupcakes.

The morning of the party began with an assembly program for all the open corridor classrooms of the school. A teacher opened the assembly by announcing fiercely, "Welcome to our party. We're going to have a lot of fun today." After the kindergarten teacher led the assembly in a song, a short play was staged by a sixth grade classroom, a poorly written, unimaginative commercial play about witches.

After the program ended, students returned to their classrooms. The first through third grade classrooms had a party, with food set up on long tables in the corridor. Parents congregated with their children in the halls and classrooms.

The whole program was billed as a party, with a good time to be had by all. However, many signs contradicted the official descriptio

of happiness. The teachers were in a state of controlled (or sometimes uncontrolled) anger, and seemed strained to the breaking point. In the assembly program, they patrolled the aisles, rushing from one place to the next, telling children to be quiet, scolding, often yanking at a child. The fact that they had to be mostly still (except when they could all sing in a group sing at prescribed intervals), for a program that ran about two hours, helps explain their fidgetiness.

But the cause of children's distress probably lay deeper. When they reached their classrooms after the program was over, they continued to be cranky and irritable. There was much scuffling and quarreling. Some children sat by themselves, looking quite unhappy. For example, Toleta, a class leader, was dressed jauntily in an Indian costume, with a suede skirt and a leather headband. (She is half Indian.) She sat alone, sucking her thumb and looking into space. When I complimented her on her costume and asked why she was sad, she didn't even acknowledge my existence. Yet the previous day, she begged me to attend the party. (The cause of her unhappiness may have been that her mother did not come to the party.)

The reality of the party was not animated happiness but barely controlled bedlam. The reason may be that, even in the open corridor, where children are ostensibly encouraged to express themselves, there is much externally imposed control, discipline and order. When the normal routine is broken, as happened in the assembly, the social fabric quickly disintegrates. The teachers were irritable

because, for them, this was an important test. "Their" children had to behave well. Teachers also perceive the entire open corridor program as on trial. During the party, one teacher kept repeating to the parents who visited how enjoyable it was and how everyone was having such a wonderful time. She stressed that this could only happen in an open corridor program and urged parents to write the school board to express support for the program.

Chapter VIII: CONCLUSION

The two schools I studied are not far apart. Yet they constitute different worlds. In part, schools are the product of larger forces. Although both schools I studied are part of the same public school system, they diverge sharply because of their differing relationship to the American class structure.

The teachers, principal, and parents at PS 38 attempted to promote a flexible imaginative school. Teachers at PS 38 consider themselves privileged to be at the school. The principal and parents encourage teachers to innovate and reward them for doing so. At PS 16, there is a feeling of bitterness and defeat. Many teachers consider being at PS 16 a punishment. They view their students with disdain and treat them accordingly. The principal expects little from the teachers and is not surprised or disappointed at their performance. But one cannot make the teachers or principal solely responsible for conditions at PS 16. Teaching there is backbreaking, tedious, and oppressive. Despite difficulties at PS 38, the problems encountered there are far less great.

Children at the two schools are also to a considerable extent the rpoduct of larger forces. Few students at PS 16 have been exposed to the cultural values that the school

system defines as excellent. There is more of a cultural difference and clash between home life and school for most students at PS 16. Children are less equipped by their background to perform well at school. They have fewer opportunities to obtain help in meeting school demands. They are more overwhelmed by the school experience and apparently develop internalized acceptance of their own mediocrity and/or a cynical defiance of school demands. Overall, then, the schools are part and parcel of larger pre-existing social patterns and forces relating to the differing class compositions of their student bodies.

Yes the schools also contribute to an ongoing process of differentiation. There are sharp contrasts in the process and content of education that the schools provide, both explicitly and implicitly, and in both academic and nonacademic realms. A summary of my findings suggest some common features in children's orientation as well as differences among children from the two schools.

Chapter 2: Why School

1. Children do not emphasize the compulsion underlying school attendance: they accept school as inevitable.

2. The lack of alternative to school reinforces the acceptance of the necessity to attend school.

3. A good student is defined as one who works hard and complies with teacher directives.

Chapter 3: The Teacher's Anger

1. Children are distressed by the teacher's yelling.

2. Most children uncritically accept the teacher's yelling and perceive it as exclusively a product of student provocation.

3. Middle class children, particularly from PS 38, are more able to criticize and challenge the teacher's yelling, as a result of family background and the more resilient atmosphere there.

Chapter 4: Images of the Teacher

1. Children learn from their teacher what to expect from those in authority.

2. PS 16 students regard the teacher as someone who dominates and commands; PS 38 students regard the teacher as a helper.

3. Children project a view of authority closely modelled on their own experience with authority: harsh and punitive for lower class children from PS 16 generous and humane for middle class children from PS 38.

Chapter 5: Classroom Rules

1. PS 16 teaches students to regard all rules as good; PS 38 seems to encourage a more flexible independent approach to rules.

2. PS 16 students accept teacher control more readily.

3. PS 16 are less able to imagine how to resist an unjust rule: PS 38 students are more trusting that authorities will come to their aid against the arbitrary actions of other authorities. They are more confident of their ability to deal with an unjust situation.

Chapter 6: Blaming the Victim

1. Most children believe that individual effort and merit accounts for differences of wealth. People begin equal and some work hard and save money; others are lazy and spendthrift.

2. Some children subscribe to primitive communism: equality of wealth is better than inequality.

3. Many children hold conservative political orientations: the poor deserve their fate.

4. Knowledge of the wider social world is highly correlated with social class background.

Chapter 7: What is School Teaching?

1. The teacher as sole authority.

2. Mystification.

3. The stifling of imagination.

4. Work as the core of reality and punishment

5. Achievement is individual.

I cannot determine how deeply children are affected by their school experience. School competes (probably not very successfully) with other influences, including family, television, and friends. The issue of impact raises thorny questions: one needs to distinguish impact among different children at the two schools, impact in diverse spheres, and present versus future impact. In this exploratory study, I have not systematically attempted to study these questions. And perhaps future impact is not the decisive question in any event. In considering this issue, I can identify with somewhat more confidence the

impact of school on myself. Years after the field research was completed, I have a vivid sense of my contrasting reactions to the two schools. If George Dennison is correct that "the proper concern of a primary school is not education in a narrow sense, and still less preparation for later life, but the present lives of the children," then a simple visit to the two schools will suffice to suggest their powerful influence.[1] That children cope with school, for better or worse, is evident. What might cause more concern is that American Society is structured such that the contrasting world of the two schools I studied is part of our everyday reality.

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[1]George Dennison, The Lives of Children: The Story of the First Street School (New York: Vintage, 1970), pp. 8-9.